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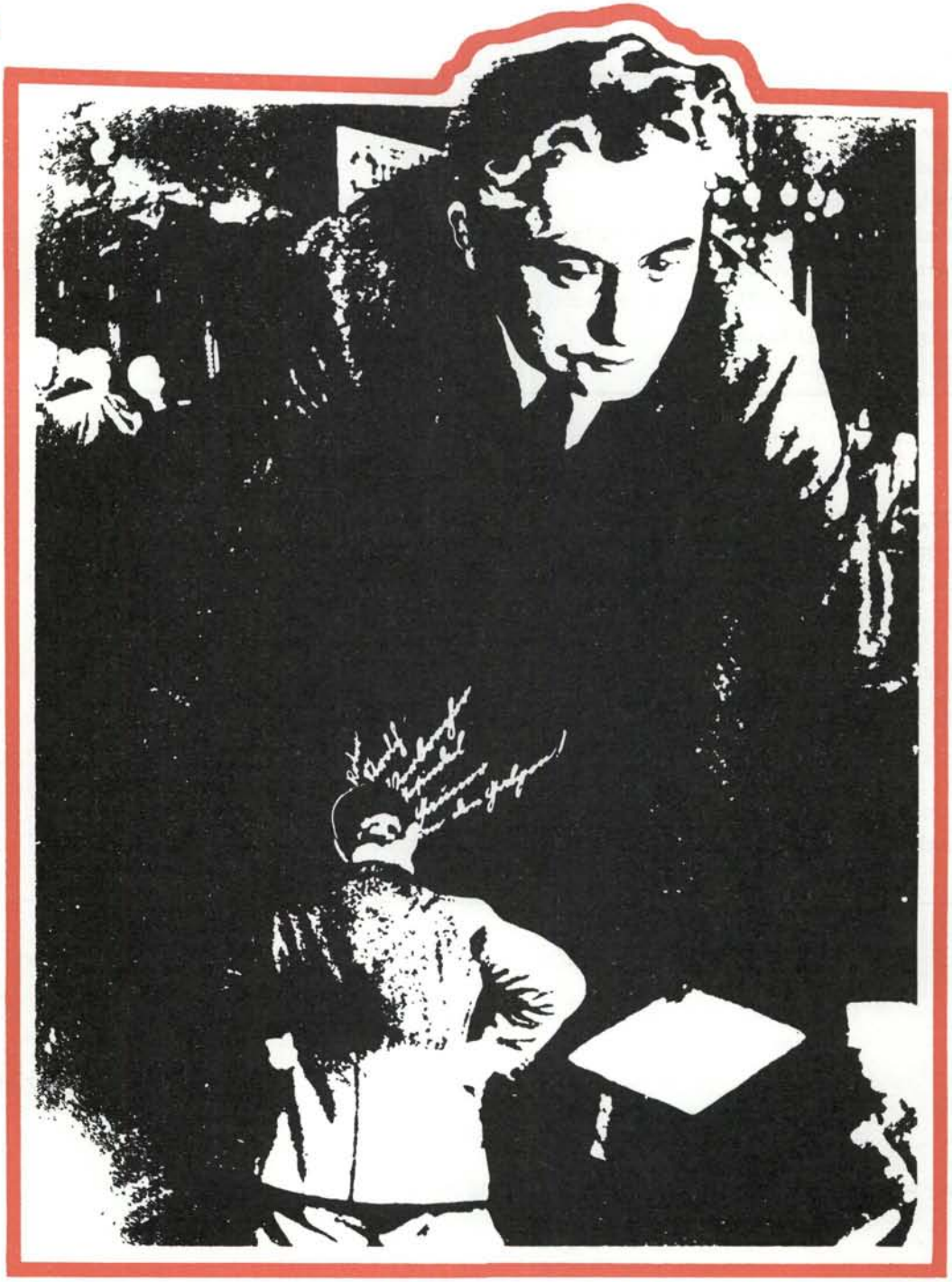

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MARXISM TODAY

THEORETICAL AND DISCUSSION JOURNAL OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

Volume 16, Number 7

Editor James Klugmann

Editorial Board Gabriel Carritt/Tony Chater/Jack Cohen/Maurice Cornforth/Maurice Dobb/John Foster/John Gollan/Arnold Kettle/John Mahon/Alan Morton/Bert Pearce/Michael Seifert/George Wake/Nick Wright

Editorial Correspondence James Klugmann, 16 King Street, WC2E 8HY

Advertisements Doris Allison, above address

Orders and Subscriptions Usual agents or Central Books Ltd., 37 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8PS

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CONTENTS

	Editorial Comments	**193**
D. N. Pritt	**The Reichstag Fire Trial and the London Counter-Trial** ..	**203**
G. M. Dimitrov	**Documents in Preparation for the 7th World Congress of the Communist International**	**208**
James Klugmann	**Georgi Dimitrov and the 7th Congress of the Communist International: Part I**	**213**
Boris Spassov	**Georgi Dimitrov on The People's Democratic State**	**218**
Memories of Dimitrov: **Isabel Brown**	**A Tribute to Georgi Dimitrov**	**222**

Lack of space has prevented the publication of the following items intended for this special issue:—

Georgi Dimitrov and the 7th Congress of the Communist International. Part II. by James Klugmann.

Some Memories of Georgi Dimitrov by Peter Kerrigan, John Williamson, Peter Zinkin.

Some extracts from Dimitrov's early writings.

They will be published in the next or a forthcoming issue.

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Editorial Comments

WE have prepared this July issue of *Marxism Today* as a modest tribute to that great Bulgarian revolutionary Georgi Dimitrov—an outstanding leader of the international working class movement—who was born on June 18 ninety years ago in the village of Kovachevtzi in the Radomir District.

We can treat in this issue but a few of the many aspects of his full life of revolutionary struggle—the Leipzig Trial, his Report to the Seventh Congress of the Communist International in 1935, the development in theory and practice of his conception of a People's Democratic State. We asked a few of those who had the privilege of meeting him, to tell us of their memories.

SON OF THE BULGARIAN WORKING CLASS

Shackled in a cell in Leipzig at the end of September 1933, preparing notes for his first speech in the fascist court, Dimitrov began to jot down notes for his first speech in his own defence:—

> "*Born on 18th June 1882 at Radomir near Sofia.*
> Left High School in the 6th Grade, worked as compositor up to 1904.
> *Son* of the Bulgarian working class.
> Born and brought up in the ranks of the revolutionary workers' movement (I have been active in this movement from the age of 15).
> For thirty years member of the Bulgarian Communist Party (formerly the Party of the so-called 'Narrow' or 'Left-Wing' Social Democrats).
> For twenty one years member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Bulgaria.
> From 1904-1923 secretary of the Trade Union Federation.
> From 1913-1923 Party deputy for Sofia in the Bulgarian Parliament—also representative of the Party in the Municipal Council of Sofia and in the Regional Council of Sofia".[1]

Dimitrov well earned the honourable title of son of the Bulgarian working class. He came of a revolutionary family. One of his brothers, Konstantin, became secretary of the Printers' Union in Sofia and was killed in the Balkan war of 1912-1913. Another brother, Nikola, went to Russia in 1905, fought in the 1905 Revolution, joined the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, worked in the underground press, was caught and exiled to Siberia, where he died on the eve of the October Revolution. Yet another, Todor, was murdered by the Bulgarian fascist police in 1925.

Brothers and sisters alike worked in the revolutionary movement and won their parents to the revolutionary cause. Those who are old enough to preserve political memories of the early thirties will still see in their mind's eye the small figure of Dimitrov's mother, Parashkeva Dimitrova, aged 72, her face furrowed by hardship, travelling to Paris to speak at the great demonstration in Dimitrov's aid, and thence to Berlin and Leipzig to demand from the Nazis the right to see her son.

Dimitrov graduated in the hard university of trade union struggle. At 18 he was secretary of the Printers' Trade Union at Sofia; at 22 secretary of the Trade Union Federation. Like many printing workers he became a voracious reader, studied the writings of the great Bulgarian national-revolutionary leaders like Hristo Botev and Vassil Levski, and then of Marxists—Marx's own writings, Plekhanov, later Lenin, and of course of the great Bulgarian Marxist Dimiter Blagoev.

But it was not only in study that he became a Marxist. In 1902, at the age of 20, he joined the Bulgarian Social Democratic Party.

BULGARIAN MARXISTS

It was not just by chance that a son of the Bulgarian working class should become a leader of the international working class movement.

After Lenin and the Bolsheviks the Bulgarian (Left Wing or 'Narrow') Social Democratic Workers' Party, formed in 1903, was one of the first Marxist revolutionary parties in Europe, and, indeed, in the world: its formation and early development is inextricably linked with the name of Dimiter Blagoev (1856-1924), whose work Dimitrov so admirably continued.

Blagoev was the founder of the socialist movement in Bulgaria. As a student in Russia he led one of the first Marxist groups in St. Petersburg, was expelled for his revolutionary activities, returned to Bulgaria and began his work of socialist propaganda

[1] Georgi Dimitrov, *Selected Works* (English), *Sofia*, Vol. I, p. 454.

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in the middle 1880's. He became the most prominent Marxist in the Balkans, and in 1891, on his initiative, the various socialist circles were united into a single Bulgarian Social Democratic Party, a party based on Marxism.

After the turn of the century Blagoev, with his comrades Georgiev and Kirkov, did battle with the right wing reformist trends within the Party. And in February 1903, led by Blagoev, the Marxists broke away and formed the Bulgarian (Left-Wing or Narrow)[2] Socialist Party, which was to become in 1919 the Bulgarian Communist Party.

It had a proud record. It opposed the First World War and strongly condemned the betrayal of the Second International. Dimitrov himself was imprisoned for his struggle against the war. Enthusiastically it hailed and showed its solidarity with the October Revolution in Russia. It became a foundation member of the Communist International in March 1919, changed its name to the Bulgarian Communist Party, and adopted a new Programmatic Declaration declaring its adoption of Leninism.

This was the party which Dimitrov joined, in which he fought, developed, and became an acknowledged leader. As a Marxist and trade unionist he led some of the greatest strikes in the country, learned to work for the unity of the workers and faced the problems of trade union organisation in conditions of semi-legality. As a Marxist he was elected to Parliament in 1913, and at the age of 31 became the first socialist worker in the whole of South East Europe to represent his class in Parliament.

Dimitrov all his life was a strong believer that the working class movement should learn from its own mistakes. And he was never afraid to criticise those movements and struggles in which he himself had been deeply engaged. Looking back in later years he was to make many criticisms of the early attitudes of the Bulgarian Marxists.[3] He criticised the "Tesnjaks" for a certain worship of spontaneity, for an acceptance of a sort of automatic working out of the laws of society which led to passivity or at times almost neutrality, for dogmatism and not understanding the nature of revolutionary compromise, for failure to understand the role of the peasantry and the relation of the democratic to the socialist revolution.

But, whatever their failings (and Dimitrov as he came to understand them fought to overcome them), the Bulgarian Marxists had, in the context of the world working class movement, a rare record of loyalty to the working class, rejection of class conciliation, opposition to imperialist war, adherence to principles, and proletarian internationalism.

This was Dimitrov's background. This was the party from which he learned and which he taught. Here he became an internationalist. (In 1912 he was fighting in Bulgaria for solidarity with the British miners). It was as a delegate from this party that he made his first contact with the Communist International.

In 1920 with his comrades he tried to make his way illegally to Moscow to attend the Second Congress of the Communist International, but was captured by a Rumanian coastal patrol. In 1921 he successfully reached by an underground route the Third Congress of the Communist International, where he had his first meeting with Lenin, and, incidentally, began a prolonged friendship with Harry Pollitt.

THE SEPTEMBER UPRISING 1923

From the Third Congress Dimitrov returned to Bulgaria. This was a stormy period in Bulgarian political life. On June 9, 1923, a military-fascist putsch by officers and Macedonian terrorists (under the patronage of the King), overthrew the Government of the Agrarian Union, and murdered its leader Stambulisky. The fascist dictatorship, which was to continue for 20 years, began its regime of murder and repression.

Dimitrov was later to analyse the mistakes of the Bulgarian Communist Party that contributed to the success of the fascist coup.[4] But no sooner had the coup been carried out than he joined with a strong group of his comrades led by Vasil Kolarov and Dimitrov himself, on the one hand to study the nature of fascism and the measures needed to defeat it, and on the other to prepare an armed uprising of the working people to overthrow the military-fascist regime.

Dimitrov's articles on fascism and the need for a united front for the defeat of fascism,

[2] The left-wing were called *Tesnjaks* or 'narrow' socialists to distinguish them from the right-wing, reformist, 'broad' socialists.

[3] See Dimitrov's "Report to the Fifth Congress of the Bulgarian Communist Party", December 1948, in *Georgi Dimitrov: Selected Articles and Speeches*, pp. 188-210, Lawrence and Wishart, 1951.

[4] G. M. Dimitrov. *Selected Works*, Sofia, Vol. II, pp. 635-636.

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which he wrote in August 1924, are one of the first serious analyses of the nature of fascism and of a strategy of united anti-fascist struggle in the history of the international communist movement.[5] They form a definite stage in his political development. His defence at the Leipzig Trial and his Report at the Seventh World Congress are in direct continuation of his thoughts and struggles of those days. He *experienced* fascism. It was, in all its horror before his eyes; it was murdering his comrades, not only workers but peasants and intellectuals, not only communists but members of the Social Democratic Party and of the Agrarian Union. Disunity had been one of the principal factors that had allowed the fascist coup to have success.

Fascism, he wrote (*The United Front and Bourgeois Reaction*) is "the complete negation of democracy and of all political rights and freedom of the masses". It "is far from being only *anti-communist*, it is at the same time anti-popular in essence". Today, he explained:—

> "the masses and the working intelligentsia, as well as their political parties and economic organisations have one common interest: with joint efforts to preserve their freedoms, right, honour and life by curbing the rising bourgeois reaction and its most typical manifestation—fascism—at its very inception."

The United Front, he wrote (*Fear of a United Front*):—

> "is indispensable in order to secure the bread, life, rights, liberties and future of the working people."

Resistance to fascism must stretch far beyond the working class. It must include all the working people "from workers, peasants, artisans, small tradesmen and clerks to physicians, lawyers, engineers, professors, retired officers and even generals, who make a living by their own labour".

He saw the need for a popular programme for united struggle, and for a government of workers and peasants that could arise from that struggle. He wrote to H. Kabakchiev, political secretary of the Central Committee of the BCP in August 1923:—

> "I consider it quite necessary for us to come out with a concrete united front programme which will at the same time be the programme of a workers' and peasants' government. . . . Only in the presence of such a programme (or of a draft programme of ours) will the question of the united front and of the workers' and peasants' government become concrete and completely intelligible to the masses."[6]

Great efforts were made by Dimitrov, Kolarov and their comrades to achieve a united front with some successes (left-wing of the Agrarian Union) but not enough. With the greatest courage they organised the armed uprising of September 23. After 10 days of intense fighting the uprising was defeated, and Dimitrov had to leave Bulgaria. Fascism, bloodier than ever, remained in power. But as Dimitrov himself many years later so clearly explained[7]:—

> "There exist however defeats which contribute much to the future victory of the emancipation course of the working class. Such was the case with the defeat of the September 1923 uprising."

And it made this contribution, with Dimitrov's aid, not only to the cause of the working class of Bulgaria, but to that of the whole world.

IN THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

After the defeat of the September uprising Dimitrov became a political emigré, based first in Vienna and later in Berlin. The word "emigré" is perhaps hardly fitting. It conjures up a vision of isolation, separation. Dimitrov became, without delay, a leading figure in the European and international communist movement and never for one moment lost contact with the illegal party of his homeland. He was an emigré of *a very special type.*

He became secretary of the Balkan Communist Federation which comprised the Communist Parties of Bulgaria, Greece, Rumania and Yugoslavia. Whilst continuing his efforts to learn the lessons of 1923 and to free the Bulgarian Party from sectarianism, to develop it in a Leninist way, he endeavoured, in the form appropriate to the different conditions, to hand on what he had learned to the other Balkan parties.

In May 1929 Dimitrov was put in charge of the West European Bureau of the Communist International (WEB), whilst retaining the post of political secretary of the Balkan Communist Federation whose headquarters was tranferred to Berlin.

[5] See G. M. Dimitrov, *Selected Works*, Vol. I pp. 180-190, Sofia. "The United Front and the Offensive of Capital", "The United Front and Bourgeois Reaction", "The United Front and the Political Crisis", "Fear of a United Front", "United Front or Class Collaboration" etc.

[6] G. Dimitrov, "*Letters 1905-1949*," (in Bulgarian), Bulgarian Communist Party, 1962.

[7] G. Dimitrov "Report to 5th Congress of the BCP", *Selected Works*, Sofia, Vol. II, p. 637.

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He began to participate in many different facets of the work of the CI and of different types of militant and revolutionary international organisations—the Red International of Labour Unions (RILU), the Bureau of the Peasant International, the Central Committee of the International Red Aid, the European Anti-Fascist Movement, the League against Imperialism. He made personal contact with the leadership of most of the West European Communist Parties. The closest contact, perhaps, he had with the Communist Party of Germany, and in 1929 led the Communist International delegation to the Twelfth Congress of the CPG. He travelled to Austria, France, Czechoslovakia, Switzerland. He participated in the Amsterdam World Congress against War in 1932, and, along with such political leaders, writers and scientists as Clara Zetkin, Albert Einstein, Henri Barbusse and Romain Rolland, was elected a member of the World Committee against War.

Dimitrov in these years up to 1923 became one of the leading figures in the Communist International. At the end of the 1920's and in the first years of the 1930's there were within the International, despite all its many achievements, some deep sectarian mistakes, particularly in regard to the estimation of social-democracy and the social democratic parties, approaches to the reformist-led trade unions, and on questions of the united front.

It would be wrong to present Dimitrov as some miraculous communist totally free of the mistakes of his time, and no-one would have rejected such an approach more firmly than Dimitrov himself. But throughout these years he was one of the leading communists within the International who *most strongly* resisted sectarianism, who *most continuously* strove for the unity of the working class.

He continued to study and to criticise the lack of a consistent struggle for the united front by the Bulgarian communists, which had contributed to the fascist advance in 1923. At the Second Conference of the Bulgarian Communist Party in 1928 he emphasised that, right up to September 1923, the Bulgarian communists had a doctrinaire approach to the Agrarian Union, and underestimated the potentially progressive role of the Stambolisky Government, and he condemned the lack of approach to the members of the Social Democratic Party.[8]

Dimitrov, learning from hard and bitter experience, had the deepest sense of both the threat and grimness of fascism, and could not, like some, belittle in any way the menace of the fascist offensive. It threatened all peoples. It must be quite clear, he stated at the 4th Congress of RILU in 1928:—

> "that fascism is not a local phenomenon, neither is it a temporary nor a transitional one. It is the whole system of the class rule of the bourgeoisie and its dictatorship in the era of imperialist and social revolution...."

Again and again as the fascist menace grew, especially the threat of Hitlerism, he made the call for anti-fascist unity. In the autumn of 1932, as a leader of the West European Bureau of the Communist International, he sent an important letter to the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI) in which he criticised aspects of the united front policy of the Communist Party of Germany, and emphasised that in his opinion, which was shared by Thaelmann, the situation of fascist offensive demanded from the German working class the unity of its forces. Its central task, he said, should be the creation of a united proletarian front. He criticised the practice of the putting forward by communists of the leading role of the Communist Party as a precondition "of the general struggle of communists, social-democrats and other working people, instead of in fact and in practice developing and winning leadership in practical joint general struggle and action."[9]

Already at the end of the twenties and in the first years of the thirties when there were many sectarian approaches to the question of the united front, Dimitrov was one of the foremost of those in the leadership of the CI who were searching for ways to overcome this sectarianism and develop the real unity of the working class to bar the road to fascism.[10]

THE LEIPZIG TRIAL

But in Germany the road was *not* barred, and Hitler came to power. Against every section of the working people of Germany

[8] P. Boev—"Georgi Dimitrov and the Strategy of United Front and of broad People's Front" in *Georgi Dimitrov: Leading Figure of the Communist Movement*, edited by A. I. Sobolev, K. K. Shirinya, K. Baichinski, D. Michev, Moscow, 1972, (in Russian) thenceforward referred to as *Sobolev*. This book contains a very valuable collection of Soviet and Bulgarian studies.

[9] Central Political Archive of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Bulgaria, F 146, op. 6, arch. ed. 813, L 1-3.

[10] Boev, *op cit*, p. 201.

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every type of terror was let loose. And for Hitler the *first* task was to uproot and annihilate the best hope of the German people—the Communist Party of Germany—as a prelude to the destruction of German socialism, German trade unionism, and everything in the country that was in any way linked with freedom, democracy and progress. A provocation was needed.

Hitler was appointed Chancellor of the Reich on January 30, 1933. On February 27 there was news of the Reichstag fire. "This is the finger of God", said Hitler to a group of journalists. "Now we shall strike at the Communists". Van der Lubbe the half-witted stooge was arrested. Then Torgler, Chairman of the communist group in the Reichstag, for "complicity in setting the Reichstag on fire". Then on March 9, the three Bulgarian communists Popov, Tanev and Dimitrov. All the stage was set for the revelation of an international communist plot.

The late D. N. Pritt in this issue of *Marxism Today* eloquently tells the story of the Leipzig trial and of the counter-trial in which he himself played so fine a role. D. N. Pritt gave a life-time of service to the struggles of the working class and progressive movement all over the world. When he died he was getting ready to leave for Bulgaria to celebrate this 90th anniversary of Dimitrov's birth. And it is, indeed, very fitting that this essay, which must have been amongst his last writings, was to commemorate Dimitrov's great defence.

As Pritt writes, Dimitrov prepared his defence in fetters. He had to appear before a hostile court, in a foreign language, with rules of procedure that he did not know, "with every imaginable handicap".

His brilliant cross questioning, continuous courageous conduct, his noble concluding speech of defence stirred the working class and people of the world.

The victory of fascism in Germany, in the country where progressive people for so many years had seen the probable next socialist revolution, brought to some a deep depression, a feeling of doubt and defeatism. Could Hitler's apparatus of terror not physically destroy its victims, turn back history for a century?

But, alone in the court, Dimitrov defied Nazism, drove Goering foaming from the court. Dimitrov, wrote Vassil Kolarov, Dimitrov's co-fighter in the leadership of the Bulgarian Party:—

> "showed in actual struggle with the enemies, who were rising against all that was progressive, that they were not so terrible as they seemed, and, provided that the democratic forces saw the issue clearly and united, then they could be destroyed."[11]

Dimitrov indicted fascism and described it. In the name of the Communist International and of working people all over the world, he showed *what it really was*.

Every word that he spoke breathed unity. Throughout the world, said Maurice Thorez, speaking in 1935 at the Seventh Congress of the CI:—

> "millions upon millions, communists, socialists, anti-fascists, workers and intellectuals, followed with tense emotions the heroic struggle of Dimitrov against the executioners of the German people, the persecutors of our courageous Thaelmann."[12]

Dimitrov had not confined himself to the defence of the communists. As he himself stated at an interview after the trial:—

> "I defended not only the communist workers and the Communist Party, but also the social democratic workers and, to some extent, the Social Democratic Party. . . . I did this because I thought it was politically correct."[13]

THE ACCUSED ACCUSES

Step by step, day by day, Dimitrov, in Pritt's words came "to dominate and transform the whole trial". The accused became the accuser. He who was to be forced to speak had to be silenced. The Nazi press that had shouted its huge head lines ended mum.

All over the world workers, intellectuals, students, communists, socialists, democrats, sprang into action to defend Dimitrov and in so doing began to lay the basis for their own unity in action. Dimitrov's dramatic defence stirred up the people of the world, and the struggle of the people of the world released Dimitrov from fascist hands. The Nazis meant to destroy him, they *had* to set him free. "It is indeed a good thing" wrote Dimitrov to the Amsterdam Pioneers who sent him a message on June 8, 1934, to congratulate him:

> "that the Nazis set us free, but it is still better that they *had* to set us free because the common struggle of the working masses the world over and our conduct in court forced them to do so."

---

[11] "*Georgi Dimitrov—65 Years Since His Birth*", Sofia (in Bulgarian). 1947.

[12] Maurice Thorez—"Speech at 7th Congress of Communist International".

[13] *World Marxist Review*, Vol. I, No. 4, 1958.

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Dimitrov emerged from the trial loved and respected all over the world. "Millions of workers know him, wrote the Soviet communist D. Z. Manuilsky, one of the leaders of the Communist International:—

> "they lived through every stage of the Reichstag fire trial with him. Each word said by him at the trial echoed to the farthest corners of the globe. . . . He became for them the living embodiment of the courage and greatness of the class who were to transform and build the world."

The Nazis had aimed to befoul the image of communism, but by the end of the trial, wrote Togliatti:—

> "the whole world saw in him a Marxist-Leninist politician, a politician distinguished by new and highly original traits such as the international workers' and democratic movement had hardly known before."[14]

MASS WORK, MASS STRUGGLE!

The Nazis, like so many reactionary courts before and since, wanted to expose the communists as incendiaries, bomb-throwers, terrorists.

In his first document of the trial, his "Statement before the Police Organs of Investigation" of March 20, 1933, Dimitrov gave his reply of principle which has an almost topical ring:—

> "I am in principle against all individual terror, against all senseless fires, because these actions are incompatible with the communist principles and methods of mass work and with the economic and mass political struggle, and because they can only be harmful to the liberation movement of the proletariat, to the communist cause.
>
> The Programmes and Constitutions of all Communist Parties and of the Communist International forbid individual terror under the threat of the expulsion from the Party of any member who may resort to methods of individual terror.
>
> All terrorist actions perpetrated in Bulgaria, including the blowing up of Sofia Cathedral in April 1925, were publicly and categorically condemned both personally by myself and by the Party to which I belong, as well as by the Communist International. We are communists and not anarchists.
>
> According to my deepest conviction, the Reichstag fire can be the work only of madmen or of the worst enemies of communism, who through this act intended to create an atmosphere conducive to the crushing of the workers' movement and the Communist Party in Germany. I am, however, neither mad, nor an enemy of communism".[15]

Dimitrov rejected from positions of principle the Nazi accusation of terrorism. And in his final speech before the court on December 16, 1933, he proclaimed the communist alternative:—

> *"Mass work, mass activity, mass opposition and the united front—no adventurism*—these are the alpha and omega of communist tactics."[16]

IN PREPARATION FOR THE CONGRESS

Pronounced not guilty and released from the Leipzig prison through the pressure of world solidarity, Dimitrov, with but a short rest, plunged into the work of the Communist International. Before the trial he was a candidate member of ECCI. After his release and move to Moscow he was promoted to being a member of the ECCI presidium.

His brilliant and brave defence had done much to develop the unity of the working class throughout the world, and, indeed, of a broader unity of the people. His release in its turn was the product of this unity.

Dimitrov was profoundly influenced by his study of the conditions for the victory of fascism in Germany in 1933, and now in 1934 by his study of the strategy and tactics of the Communist Party of France, which in 1934 was successfully barring the road to the French fascists—the Croix de Feu (Fiery Cross).

He was preoccupied with the need to make a radical turn in the strategy and tactics of the international communist movement. "He spoke", writes Alfred Kurella, then his private secretary, "of the need to change the tactics of the communist movement precisely on the basis of his experience of the Reichstag Fire Trial".[17]

In the second half of 1934 preparations began for the Seventh Congress of the Communist International and Dimitrov was put in charge of the commission which was to prepare the second point on the agenda, "The Fascist Offensive and the Tasks of the Communist International in the Struggle of the Working Class against Fascism."

We print in this issue three documents which are in the Central Party Archives of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism under the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union—the preparatory outline of Dimitrov's Report, his letter of July 1, 1934, submitting this outline to the other members of the commission and his intervention when the commission met.

[14] *Memories of Georgi Dimitrov*, Sofia (in Bulgarian), Vol. 2, p. 40.

[15] *Georgi Dimitrov: Leipzig 1933*, Sofia (in English), 1968, p. 13.

[16] Ibid, p. 176.

[17] *Memories of Dimitrov*, Sofia Press (in Bulgarian), Vol. II, p. 40.

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We strongly urge our readers to study these documents with care, because they are of the greatest significance for understanding how the turn in the work of the Communist International, represented by the Seventh Congress of July-August 1935 was to come about.

Dimitrov's letter to the commission is of special importance. It raises the key questions involved in the achievement of working class unity and in shedding sectarian approaches, a necessary prerequisite for unity.

He puts the question of the incorrect description of social democracy as social fascism. He queries whether it is right to consider social democracy as "the main prop of the bourgeoisie", or the left social democrats as "the main enemy". He sharply raises the question of changing communist approaches to trade unions under reformist leadership and the need for trade union unity. Above all, he raises the need to cease looking on the united front as a sort of manoeuvre, and to transform it "into a real factor for the development of real struggle against the offensive of fascism". He demands some radical changes in the methods of work and leadership of the Communist International itself.

The threat of fascism made the issue of unity a question of life or death for the working class movement. It is absolutely true that the main guilt for the lack of unity lay with the leaders of social democracy. But communists had also made mistakes of a sectarian character with regard to unity, and it was necessary without delay to re-examine the whole issue of unity, to develop a whole strategy of unity to defeat the twin, inextricably linked threats of fascism and war.

To this turn in strategy there were many contributions made, collective and personal, but no-one made a greater contribution than Georgi Dimitrov.

REPORT AT THE SEVENTH CONGRESS

Dimitrov delivered on August 2, 1935, his main report on "The Fascist Offensive and the Tasks of the CI". On August 13 he replied to the discussion, and, on August 20 he made the closing speech to the Congress as a whole.[18]

The reports were, of course, the product of collective work, but a collective work in which Dimitrov was playing the leading role. The questions which he posed in his letter to the commission on the second point of the agenda in June 1934 were, for the most part, answered in his report and reply to the Congress in August 1945.

We publish in this issue a short study of his interventions at the Seventh Congress. What were the essential contents?

He defined the nature of fascism. He set the world working class the historic task of achieving unity in the fight against war and fascism:—

> "Unity of action of the proletariat on a national and international scale is the mighty weapon which renders the working class capable not only of successful defence but also of successful counter attack against fascism, against the class enemy."

He explained the need to establish a broad popular front against fascism in which the peasantry, urban petty-bourgeoisie, and intelligentsia would be won to fight side by side with the working class.

He developed Lenin's teaching on the need always to be searching for new forms of transition to socialism, approaches to socialist revolution, taking into account the specific conditions of the time and place. In this connection he discussed the possibility and nature of united front governments which might arise in certain conditions in certain countries.

Drawing especially from the experience of the revolutionary activities of the Communist Party of China he showed the need to establish an anti-imperialist front in colonial and semi-colonial countries and discussed the anti-imperialist stage of the colonial struggle.

He developed in his report and replies to discussion exceedingly important questions of the relation of the fight for democracy and for socialism and of the inter-connection of patriotism and proletarian internationalism. He called for unreserved solidarity with the Soviet Union.

He outlined what in his conception was and was not meant by the necessity of the leading role of the Communist Party.

And he gave to the Congress that deep confidence that whatever the horror and the threat of fascism might be the future lay with the working class:—

> "The present rulers of the capitalist world are but *temporary* rulers.
> "The proletariat is the *real master, tomorrow's master of the world.*"

[18] The three speeches are published in Georgi Dimitrov, *The United Front*, Lawrence and Wishart, 1938, in Georgi Dimitrov, *Selected Articles and Speeches*, Lawrence and Wishart, 1951 and in the *Selected Works*, Vol. I, Sofia 1967.

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AFTER THE SEVENTH CONGRESS

From the Seventh Congress of the Communist International until its dissolution in 1943 Dimitrov was the general secretary of the Communist International. He was one of an international collective which included such communists as Gottwald, Kuusinen, Manuilsky, Pieck, Pollitt, Thorez and Togliatti.

We cannot follow him here at all the stages of the complex world struggle before and during the first years of the Second World War. Much has been written about it, though all too little in English.[19]

Older sectarian approaches could not be overcome in an instant, and Dimitrov was heavily engaged in discussing with various parties the means of fulfilment of the decisions of the 7th Congress. Luis Carlos Prestes, tells, for instance, of the advice given him by Dimitrov before his return to Brazil in October 1935 to broaden the mass struggle against fascism and avoid provocation and adventurism.[20]

Under his leadership the re-organisation of the Communist International began to take place as decided at the Seventh Congress. By a decision of the ECCI Secretariat of September 1935, approved by the Presidium in October, operative leadership passed into the hands of each individual Communist Party. The regional secretariats were dissolved. The functions of the General Secretary were defined. Dimitrov stated at the ECCI Secretariat of June 1937, concerned with re-organisation:—

> "It is true that the Seventh Congress brought about a turn in the sphere of the leadership given by the CI to the Communist Parties. The Parties must more and more stand on their own feet and must be capable of deciding independently their policy and tactics, and must exercise operative leadership at any moment. And we want this to be achieved definitively by all our Parties."[21]

He was adamant in the struggle to achieve trade union unity. In February 1936 the Secretariat of ECCI discussed the position of the French Communist Party in connection with trade union unity. Lozovsky, leader of RILU, saw the French communists' approach to unity as a concession to reformism. But Dimitrov with Manuilsky and others strongly defended their efforts for unity.[22]

Dimitrov was always searching for new concrete forms of transition to socialism in the new specific conditions that continuously arose in the international struggle. He made a most significant intervention at a meeting of the ECCI Secretariat on September 18-19, 1936, on the character of the Spanish Revolution and the nature of the Special Republican Government. With the existing relation of class forces in the world, with the Soviet Union on one side and the fascist dictatorship on the other, the question of the bourgeois democratic revolution and the bourgeois democratic state could not be posed, he said, as previously. The Spanish Republic, for whose victory the Spanish people were fighting, would not be the old type of democratic republic but a "special type of State with a genuine people's democracy. It will not yet be a Soviet State, but left, anti-fascist, with the participation of the genuinely left section of the bourgeoisie".[23]

FIGHT FOR PEACE

In the years that followed the Seventh Congress right up to the outbreak of the Second World War it was perhaps in the world fight for peace that Dimitrov exercised his greatest influence.

Fascism means war, he declared again and again. And the fascist threat is not only directed against the USSR but against such states as France and Great Britain:—

> "It would not be correct to think that the war which is approaching threatens the Soviet Union alone or even the Soviet Union in the first place. As a matter of fact the occupation of the Rhineland by Hitler's armies is a direct threat to France, Belgium and other European countries. It is also a fact that Hitler's immediate plans of conquest are directed towards the seizure of territories in neighbouring countries where there is a German population."[24]
>
> "As far as the Far East is concerned, there can be no doubt that a *direct* blow is aimed at the Chinese people. . . .
>
> Hence it is clear that the people of the West would commit a fatal error if they allowed themselves to be lulled by the illusion that the fascist warmongers in Europe and the Far East do not threaten them."[25]

He called for a united peace front on a world scale:—

[19] See especially Sobolev and others *Georgi Dimitrov: Leading Figure of the Communist Movement*, Moscow 1972 (in Russian).

[20] *Memories of Georgi Dimitrov*, Sofia (in Bulgarian), Vol. II, p. 142.

[21] Central Party Archive, Institute of Marxism-Leninism, 495/18/1206/101-102.

[22] CPA, IML, 495/18/1075/324.

[23] Quoted in an article by K. K. Shirinya and I. N. Ksenofontov on "Georgi Dimitrov and the National Revolutionary War in Spain" in *op cit* by Sobolev and others.

[24] *The Struggle for Peace*, May 1st, 1936, published in Georgi Dimitrov, *The United Front*, p. 172, Lawrence and Wishart, 1938.

[25] *Ibid*, p. 173.

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"A united peace front is required which would include not only the working class, the peasants, the intellectuals and other working people, but also the oppressed nations and peoples of all countries whose independence is threatened by the warmongers".[26]

And this must not just be a verbal resolution or declaration:—

"this peace front will become powerful and invincible if it organizes practical mass action, not restricting itself to protests, resolutions or declarations."[27]

But if such a broad peace front is to be strong, effective, its leadership must come from a united working class:—

"Only the proletariat, uniting its ranks, can be the organiser of such a peace front, can be its driving force, its back-bone. This is now the *central task* of the international proletariat as a whole."[28]

The final lesson, as true today as it was then:—

"To *want* peace is not enough. It is necessary to *fight* for peace."[29]

BULGARIA LIBERATED

Not for a moment did Dimitrov, in the course of his duties in the international communist movement, lose contact with the working people of his native Bulgaria. This remained true in the difficult conditions of World War II when the ruling fascist clique, around the monarchy, pushed Bulgaria into the war on the side of German fascism.

It was Dimitrov who first made the suggestion for the formation of a *Fatherland Front* of resistance to Bulgarian fascism. When the ruling class had betrayed the independence of the Bulgarian people only the working people under the leadership of the working class could, as the real patriots, he explained, defend the interests of the nation.

On July 17, 1942, the Hristo Botev radio station carried Dimitrov's broadcast on the "Fatherland Front Programme".[30]

"The anti-popular policy of the Government of King Boris represents a veritable national peril. Today Bulgaria is being turned into a vassal of Hitler, and the Bulgarian people—into slaves of the German imperialists.

In view of the inevitable disaster to which Hitler's plan for world domination is doomed, any prolongation of this treacherous policy means consciously to push the Bulgarian people into the abyss and to make them lose their national independence.

The supreme duty of the Bulgarian people, of their army and patriotic intelligentsia at the present historical moment is to close their ranks in a mighty Fatherland Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria."

In 1943 and the following year Dimitrov, keeping contact with Bulgaria by radio, press and illegal means, helped to develop guerilla resistance in Bulgaria and political resistance under the leadership of the Fatherland Front. Resistance in every form, armed and political, developed in town and countryside. The Communist Party grew stronger. Sections of the regular army came nearer to the resistance.

The moment arrived when conditions were ripe for an armed people's uprising. On August 27, 1944, Dimitrov sent his historic message to the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party outlining the key steps in preparation for such a rising.[31]

On September 9, 1944, workers, peasants, artisans, the progressive intelligentsia, the patriotic part of the regular army along with the partisan units, took part in the uprising, led by the Communist Party and with the support of the Red Army of the Soviet Union.

"September 9," wrote Dimitrov on September 20, "ushered in a new era in the history of our people". It constituted "a solid foundation for the building up of a new, free, independent and strong Bulgaria."[32]

TOWARDS A SOCIALIST BULGARIA

Some 22 years after his enforced departure Dimitrov returned to his native Bulgaria, was elected as a deputy in the first elections to the National Assembly held after liberation, became the President of the Council of Ministers of the People's Republic of Bulgaria.

As General Secretary of the Bulgarian Communist Party and Prime Minister of the People's Republic his name is connected with every economic, political and social advance made in the next three years, with the turn to a planned economy, the development of co-operative farming, the drafting of the new constitution, the establishment of a People's Democratic State.

When, on November 5, 1945, he put his feet on Bulgarian soil, he could all too justly declare:—

[26] *Ibid*, p. 175.
[27] *Ibid.*
[28] *Ibid.* p. 176.
[29] *Ibid.*
[30] *The Fatherland Front Programme*, *Selected Works* in English, Sofia, 1967, Vol. II, pp. 33-35.
[31] "*Directive to the General HQ of the Partisan Forces*," *Selected Works*, Sofia 1967, Vol. II, pp. 61-62.
[32] "*All for the Front*", *Selected Works*, Sofia 1967, p. 63.

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> "Twenty-two years have passed since I was on Bulgarian soil. You will not doubt me, if I say, that in all that time wherever I was and whatever I did, I have never for one moment stopped thinking of the Bulgarian people, and fighting for their future, their happiness and their welfare."

Less than a year before his death, making his great speech in opening the Fifth Congress of the Bulgarian Communist Party in December 1948, he came to grips with the problem of People's Democracy. From the tribune of the Bulgarian Party Congress, delivered on Bulgarian soil, he elucidated the problem of the nature of People's Democracy as a form of transition to socialism, a problem which was facing at that time a whole number of different Communist Parties, and was under discussion by communists throughout the world. Professor Spassov treats the question in this issue of *Marxism Today*.

SYMBOL OF WORKING CLASS UNITY

Mourned by the working people all over the world, Dimitrov died on July 2, 1949. Seldom in the history of the international communist movement has one man embodied the aspirations of so many all over the world. What were the qualities that won him such deep love and such deep respect?

One quality is that he, as a man who was so faithful to principle, was so undoctrinaire and undogmatic. His feet were on the ground. He detested abstract blueprints. He was an enemy of what he used to call stereotyped phrases, schematism, empty and pious slogans. He wanted problems like the nature of social democracy, the path to working class unity, the form of advance to socialism to be studied concretely, in their context, in terms of real living situations, people and organisations.

He was capable, wrote Otto Kuusinen, of skilfully combining "uncompromising adherence to principle with political flexibility."[33] He combined loyalty to principle, wrote Togliatti, with the taking of decisions only after the most careful study of all the concrete factors and facts.[34]

A second quality that strengthened him throughout his long political life was this continuous combination of a deep popular patriotism with true people's internationalism. He was proud to be a son of the Bulgarian working class. He defended his people at the fascist tribunal of Leipzig. A leader of the international communist movement he returned to his homeland to spend his last years laying the foundations of a socialist Bulgaria, but from his date of joining the Bulgarian Left-Wing Socialists in 1902 he remained a consistent internationalist. The fact that he was a true *Bulgarian*, with roots deep in the Bulgarian revolutionary movement made him a stronger, more real, living *international* leader.

A quality that endeared him to the working class all over the world, that seemed to inspire them to hope and action at the most difficult moments of struggle, was his faith in the working class, in their capacity, in their ultimate victory. "I can see him now", wrote Pollitt, "unfolding to me his dream of what the workers and peasants of his beloved Bulgaria would make of their beautiful country. And in spite of all the difficulties they would have to surmount, he had the firm and proud conviction that they would succeed."[35]

Above all his life, his teaching, his theory and his practice embodied the deep understanding that working class unity was necessary, that working class unity was possible, that working class unity meant working class strength.

"You penetrated the minds of millions of workers the world over", wrote Manuilsky on Dimitrov's Sixtieth Birthday (June 1942), "as a symbol of that great truth, painfully acquired by the working class—unity. Dimitrov and the unity of the working class are indivisible."

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[33] *Memoirs of Georgi Dimitrov*, Sofia (in Bulgarian), Vol. II, p. 108.

[34] *Ibid*, p. 122.

[35] Harry Pollitt, *Introduction* to Dimitrov's *Selected Articles and Speeches*, Lawrence and Wishart, 1951.

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The Reichstag Fire Trial and the London Counter-Trial

D. N. Pritt

While this article was at the press we received the sad news of D. N. Pritt's death. He was always a great friend and supporter of this journal and his loss is very great. This article must have been one of the last that he wrote. In itself it is no mean memorial to him, for his work at the Dimitrov Counter Enquiry was a splendid example of the courageous activity he undertook throughout his life against injustice and oppression.

One of the many services which Georgi Dimitrov rendered to socialism and to mankind, and one of the most striking of the many manifestations of his greatness, came about partly by accident. He was involved in the Reichstag Fire Trial simply because the Nazis prosecuted him for complicity in the fire, of which he was wholly innocent. Had they not done so, he would not have had the opportunity to transform their first great "show-trial" into their first humiliating defeat by his conduct at the trial, in which he not merely cross-examined Goering into an outburst of uncontrolled rage, but also made a magnificent public defence of communism and exposure of fascism, in the face of the whole might of Nazi Germany and its mass media of publicity.

To tell this part of his heroic history, and to give some account both of the trial at Leipzig and the counter-trial in London, I must begin with the political and economic background against which the Reichstag was set on fire, and then deal with the fire itself, the prosecution and the trial, and the counter-trial.

To begin with the background, let us see how the Nazis stood at and before the time of the fire, which took place on February 27, 1933. The world-wide economic slump of the 'thirties, which gravely affected every capitalist country, hit Germany—then the weak "Weimar Republic"—especially hard, causing mass unemployment and other distresses, and it had become clear to the brutal and reactionary ruling class of Germany that it could not maintain capitalist rule in Germany unless it could destroy democratic liberties and safeguards and eliminate trade unions and other working class organisations—in effect, unless it could establish a dictatorship.

The Nazi Party—the German variety of fascism—which aimed at just such a dictatorship, had been in existence for some years, with varying fortunes. By January 30, 1933, it had gone some way towards gaining power and establishing such a dictatorship: on that day a coalition government of the Nazis and the right-wing German Nationalist People's Party took office, headed by Hitler as Chancellor, but containing only two other Nazis in a Cabinet of 11 ministers. A general election had been called for March 5, less than five weeks off, and the Nazis wanted, not just a victory for the coalition in that election, but an absolute victory for themselves, so that they could take full power and establish open fascism. For that, they would have both to win over a good many votes from other parties, and to find some pretext for outlawing the Communist Party and annulling all its votes.

They were handicapped by an acute shortage of money, and wanted to persuade the ruling class that they really could "deliver the goods" for dictatorship, and therefore deserved its financial support. Only on February 20, with less than a fortnight to go before polling day, did the ruling class become convinced. On that day, its chieftains—Krupp, Thyssen, Dr. Schacht, and others—agreed to supply 3,000,000 mks. for the election. That was very helpful to the Nazis but it was not enough, for they realised that they could not find a pretext for outlawing the Communists, nor win an absolute victory, unless they could somehow stage before polling day some really sensational *coup* which would both swing votes in their favour, and make it possible to invalidate communist votes and outlaw the Communist Party.

Two Stage *Coup*

They operated the *coup* in two stages. The first and least important stage came on February 23, when they searched the Berlin Headquarters of the Party (the Karl-Leibknecht Haus) and announced that they had discovered masses of documents containing detailed plans for "terror operations", including the destruction of government buildings; and they promised to publish the documents in the near future. This story is largely forgotten nowadays, for the whole thing was an invention, and no documents were ever published. But it was no doubt of use to the Nazis to introduce and to make more plausible the burning of the Reichstag and the

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attribution of the fire to the Communists, which was the second stage of the coup. This and its sequelae were, and are of course, of the greatest importance, both immediately and in the long run, to public opinion at home and abroad. It is still a great historical event.

The fire, which started inside the Reichstag building, began shortly before 9.15 p.m., and was all over within an hour or two. It raised many questions. The first and most important was: who set the fire? The only person found in the building when it was searched after the fire was a half-blind and half-witted Dutch vagrant called van der Lubbe, who was said by the Nazis to be a Communist, but was in truth nothing of the sort. All he had had to work with was a few domestic fire-lighters, but it is pretty certain that he had managed to start one or two of the 40 or 50 seats of fire found by the searchers. But this poor half-blind creature, working in the dark with no previous knowledge of the building, could never have started more than a few of the fires, nor could he have brought into the building the great quantity of incendiary material in fact employed; someone else must have done the bulk of the work.

The only way in which either the number of men or the quantity of material needed to start such a large and rapid fire could possibly have been brought into the building without being detected by the guards was through the tunnel which linked the Reichstag building with the adjoining residence of the President of the Reichstag—Goering himself! It was thus clear to all who understood the political situation—but not to the general mass of citizens—that the fire must have been, and in fact was, staged by the Nazis, the only people who stood to gain by it, and above all not by the Communists, for whom it was not only foreign to their principles, but immediately disastrous.

The moment the fire was over, the government acted swiftly: it announced that it was the work of the Communists, intended not just as an isolated act of arson but as the signal for a mass wave of armed terror. In the following 12 to 14 hours, it arrested some 1,500 persons, mostly Communists, in Berlin alone, and between 4,000 and 5,000 in all Germany. (The arrests were made on warrants which had been prepared in advance, mostly with photographs attached). And on the next morning, February 28, it issued a Decree suppressing freedom of speech, of the press, and of assembly, and the privacy of correspondence, and legalised the search of private houses; and a little later it declared all elections of Communist Deputies to be invalid.

The immediate result of the fire, with the Government in control of all media of information, was to swing votes to the Nazis, increasing their seats to 288 and reducing the Communists from 100 to 81. The Nazis had thus a small absolute majority in a house of 566. By this insolent swindle, as it was in due course proved to be, the Nazis were "legally" established as the government of Germany, and were enabled "legally" to establish a dictatorship, and to rule the country by terror for 12 years, bringing it to collapse.

The Prosecution

The next stage in the story is the prosecution. The investigatory proceedings started immediately after the fire, the long indictment was signed on July 24, and the trial began on September 21, lasting until December 23. To take nearly seven months to bring a case designed as a showpiece, and intended in particular to "smear" the Communists as dangerous criminals, at a period when the Nazis were not as yet as confident or as contemptuous of public opinion as they later became, seems at first sign very dilatory. But the Nazis had at least two difficulties in preparing their case. The first was that they had to decide whom to prosecute, an essential point to which they do not appear to have given adequate thought. Obviously, they had to include van der Lubbe, but a show trial with that unhappy moron sitting alone in the dock, scarcely able to speak or to understand and likely at any moment to blurt out—as he did one or twice at the trial—remarks highly damaging to the Nazis who had obviously put him in the Reichstag, would have been unthinkable. So they had to find some company for him; and in the end they prosecuted four other people, all of whom had to be acquitted!

How did they pick them? They began on February 28 by arresting Ernst Torgler, the Chairman of the Communist Party fraction in the outgoing Reichstag, who went voluntarily to the Police President of Berlin with his solicitor, to protest against accusations that he was implicated in the fire. He was not one of the 1,500 people arrested on warrants as mentioned above, but the Police President took the opportunity to arrest him then and there, and he joined van der Lubbe as a second accused.

Then, on March 9, the Nazis had what seemed to them to be a piece of good fortune: a waiter in a well-known restaurant in Berlin, a man of weak character, probably a police or Gestapo spy or informer—and proved at the trial to be an obvious liar—noticed three people dining together, speaking a foreign language, and according to him, "looking suspicious", and reported his "find" to the police. They were in fact, Dimitrov and his two comrades, Tanev and Popov—two men of importance and value to their country and Party, although at the trial they were naturally overshadowed by their great chief. Without any enquiry as to whether any evidence could be found against them, the Nazis immediately arrested them, and they were added to the accused, thus completing the team of five

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accused, "selected", if that is not too precise a word, for the long trial at Leipzig. One can well understand the Nazis being tempted to prosecute Dimitrov: he was a "foreign Communist", always bait for fascists and reactionaries of all kinds, including British, and if this already well-known Communist could be convicted, the value of the show trial would be greatly increased.

But Dimitrov, as we shall see, turned this good fortune into a disaster for them and the greatest good fortune for the dreaded Communists, for truth, for anti-fascism, and indeed for the whole world. The happy accident of the waiter's hyper-vigilance transformed the trial.

The other great difficulty for the Nazis was this: the primary purpose of the trial being to convince the world that the Communists had burned the Reichstag, it was vital to show just how they had managed to carry through this elaborate incendiary enterprise in a well-guarded government building without being detected; and the more this problem was studied, the clearer it grew that the tunnel must have been used. As access to the Reichstag through the tunnel could only be gained from Goering's residence, any thorough investigation would have been bound to disclose that the tunnel had in fact been used, which would be utterly damning for the Nazi case. The investigators had thus to prepare the case with one hand tied behind their backs; they dare not probe too deeply lest the Nazis, and Goering in particular, be exposed as the guilty parties.

One could perhaps count as a third difficulty for the investigators that there was virtually no evidence against any of the accused except van der Lubbe; Dimitrov himself had an impregnable alibi.

The Counter Trial

Before the Leipzig trial began, there came the remarkable "counter-trial", and I must now deal with that. The whole concept of holding the counter-trial—officially called the "Reichstag Fire Enquiry" —was worked out in Paris by a number of German emigrés, some of whom afterwards became famous, and others in Paris who were organising a great propaganda campaign against the Nazis in general and the Leipzig trial in particular, with a view to influencing world opinion so as both to secure the acquittal of Dimitrov, and to prove the double point that the communists had nothing to do with the fire, and that the Nazis were in fact guilty. (As we shall see, this whole ambitious programme was fulfilled).

The idea of holding the counter-trial was, from an orthodox bourgeois point of view, and especially from a lawyer's point of view, somewhat audacious. Here were a number of people awaiting trial before a regular court in a country hitherto ranking as civilised, on a charge of a crime alleged to be committed in that country; and the proposal was that a wholly unofficial group of lawyers from various countries—in the end, seven—having no mandate or authority from any government so to do, should sit in some country outside Germany—in the end, in Britain—should hear the evidence of many witnesses and study many documents, proving many facts material to the issues to be tried at Leipzig but not expected to be brought out there, and should then give their "judgement" on these issues, and in particular on the crucial question—who burnt the Reichstag?

Anyway, the scheme was carried through with complete success. In spite of all sorts of obstacles put in its way by the British government and other reactionaries, and of all the practical difficulties inherent in holding a "trial" before a "court" having no power, the counter-trial was held in public in London before a group of experienced lawyers (of whom I was one, and indeed, the chairman). After several days of hearing, and 24 hours of earnest discussion between seven lawyers who had not even a common language, we were able to agree on a "judgement" which I read out in public in the Caxton Hall in London, a day or two before the trial in Leipzig began. We concluded that the Communists were wholly innocent, and that grave grounds existed for suspecting the Nazis were in fact the guilty party.

This judgement had a great effect both on the trial at Leipzig and generally. At Leipzig where copies of the judgement were in the hands of the judges and advocates from the start of the hearing (although Dimitrov was refused a copy!), much time was taken up in discussing it. The public prosecutor

GEORGI DIMITROV

Leading Trade Unionist in the Print Trades:
Opponent of Goering at Leipzig:
Secretary of Communist International:
First Prime Minister of the Bulgarian People's Republic.

The Society for Friendship with Bulgaria exists to promote friendship and knowledge of Bulgaria.

Annual subscription 40p. Students 15p.
Married couples 50p.

Secretary: Jack Dunman,
388 City Road, London, E.C.1.

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at many stages, especially in his final speech, devoted more time to attempts to refute the evidence given at the counter-trial than to his proper task of conducting the case against the accused on the evidence given before the Leipzig court. The officially appointed defence advocates—who in their difficult tasks played a rather sorry role—did much the same; Torgler's defender was more than half way through his final speech before he began to deal with the case of his client!

In its wider effects, the counter-trial helped to convince large sections of public opinion in many countries of the truth of the matter, thus making an early and a great contribution to the anti-fascist struggle.

The Leipzig Trial

Then comes the Leipzig trial itself. The Court, the Supreme Court of Germany, consisted of three regular professional judges, appointed before the Nazi regime began. (The Nazis probably felt that they could not venture, at that early stage in their history and in the teeth of uneasy public opinion in the other world, to "pack" the court with newly appointed Nazi judges; and they may also have felt that they could trust the regular judges, in the atmosphere of hysteria created by their propaganda, to do what they wanted.)

In the result, in the light of the complete lack of evidence against any of the accused except van der Lubbe, the Court acquitted all the other accused: indeed, the Public Prosecutor actually invited them to do so. But this does not mean that the court behaved properly. It treated Dimitrov with great discourtesy and harshness. It frequently forbade him to do things which he had a perfect right to do, and on five separate occasions it punished him for alleged misbehaviour of the most trivial character by excluding him from his own trial for periods totalling about a fortnight. (One of his acts of "misbehaviour" was his cross-examination of Goering, which I shall describe below). And, while it was really compelled to acquit all but one of the accused, the court managed, in spite of the absence of any evidence to support such a finding, to pronounce that the fire had been set by "the communists."

The highlight of the trial, which has made it an unforgettable part of history, was the behaviour of Dimitrov himself. He started with every imaginable handicap; he was not a lawyer, and he had to argue before a hostile court administering rules of procedure even more complicated than ours; and his command of German was not very good. He was already over 50 years old, and not in very good health; he was kept in prison all the time from his arrest until his acquittal over nine months later (and indeed, until his release another two months after that); and for five months from April 4 he was shackled day and night. For some time he was even deprived of his spectacles, without which he could scarcely read or write. Yet, under these conditions, he mastered enough of the law and the procedure, and sufficiently improved his German, not just to be able to defend himself better than the most efficient and sympathetic advocate could have done, but to dominate and transform the whole trial. From the start he transformed the trial into a defence of communism and an indictment of nazism. The Nazis, who had begun long verbatim radio reports of the hearings, were soon driven to reduce them gravely.

Whilst Dimitrov's domination of the proceedings was continuous, there were two outstanding stages in his defence—really one should say, counter-attack—namely the cross-examination of Goering, and his final speech.

Dimitrov versus Goering

Goering had not been included in the long list of witnesses named in the indictment, but by the end of October the case was going so badly for the Nazis that they decided to call him into the witness-box to "pull things round." They probably thought that they ran no risk in calling him, and may even have expected his evidence to go unchallenged, for he had all the importance of a high minister, and German court practice, although it allows of cross-examination, knows practically nothing of the British system of using it to destroy the credibility of a witness as a means of "getting one's case across." The Nazis soon learnt their mistake; Dimitrov, in spite of the very hostile atmosphere and of many interruptions by the court, and in the presence of a packed nazi audience still convinced that the Communists had in fact burnt the Reichstag, cross-examined Goering on what were in effect purely British lines, putting to him that Communists are honourable men, that the world's future lies in communism, and that the Nazis were liars and criminals who had themselves burnt the Reichstag. Let me quote from the cross-examination:

Dimitrov: "Does the Minister-President" (i.e. Goering) "know that the Party to whom he attributes these criminal principles, rules over one-sixth of the world, that is, the Soviet Union?"

Goering: "Yes, unfortunately."

Dimitrov: "This Soviet Union is in diplomatic, political, and economic relations with Germany. Through these economic relations hundreds of thousands of German workers have got work and still have work. Does the Minister-President know that?"

Goering: "Yes, I know that. . . . What Russia does is nothing to do with me. I have to deal only with the Communist Party in Germany, and with

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foreign Communists who come here to burn the Reichstag."

(Pretty cool, this, from one who had the best reasons for knowing that Dimitrov was innocent, since he had himself organised the fire).

After the packed audience had applauded this outburst of Goering without being rebuked or even stopped by the judges*, the cross examination continued:

Dimitrov: "These principles, these Bolshevik principles, govern the Soviet Union, the greatest and best country in the world." (Laughter). "Is that known to the Minister-President?" (More laughter).

Goering: "You listen. I'll tell you what the German people know. They know . . . that you came here to burn the Reichstag, and then to give all this insolence to the German people. I didn't come here to be accused by you."

Dimitrov: "You are a witness" (i.e. you have gone into the witness box and I therefore have a right to cross-examine you.)

Goering: "In my eyes you are a swindler, who should have gone to the gallows long ago."

Dimitrov: (showing a superb understanding of the long-term importance of what was happening): "Very good. I am very satisfied."

The presiding judge, who ought to have intervened some time earlier to tell Goering that as a witness he should not abuse the cross-examiner, then told Dimitrov that he was not to carry on "communist propaganda", adding: "If you say another word, I'll have you turned out again." He volunteered the excuse for Goering that he had "flared up" because Dimitrov was indulging in propaganda. (Goering was by now, in truth, in a state of gibbering rage). The shrewd Dimitrov merely repeated: "I am very satisfied with this statement by Herr Goering." This led the presiding judge to deprive him of the right to speak further, but he managed to put one more question: "Are you frightened of my questions, Mr. Minister-President?", to which Goering replied: "You wait until I get hold of you when you come out of prison, you swindler!"

This threat by a witness—unrebuked—to murder the accused is illuminating. It revealed that Goering already knew that Dimitrov could not be convicted, but must "come out of prison", and it foreshadowed the efforts of Goering, to which I will come later, to have Dimitrov murdered after his acquittal.

The whole episode did immense harm to the Nazis in the eyes of world opinion. The important Swiss bourgeois newspaper, the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, commented that "the whole trial has been rendered worthless at one blow."

Dimitrov's Final Speech

Dimitrov's final speech lacked, of course, the swift flashes of lightning of parts of the cross-examination, but it was a splendid and defiant praise and vindication of all that Dimitrov stood for and loved. He had prepared it carefully, and delivered it in the teeth of constant (and unjustified) attempts by the presiding judge to make him cut it short and sit down. I must quote a little of it (in my own translation from the original German):

"I have defended myself as an accused Communist. I have defended my own communist revolutionary honour. I have defended my ideas, my communist convictions. I have defended the meaning and the content of my life. . . .

So, every sentence I have uttered before the court is, so to say, blood of my blood and flesh of my flesh. Every word is the expression of my deepest indignation against this unjust accusation, against the fact that such an anti-communist crime should be attributed to Communists. . . .

I can say with a clear conscience that I have spoken nothing but the truth on all questions before the court and the public. . . .

My object has been to refute the accusation, and to prove that Dimitrov, Torgler, Popov and Tanev, had nothing to do with the fire.

The press has reviled not merely myself in every fashion—that did not worry me—but has also described the Bulgarian people, linked with me, as savage and barbarian. . . . I cannot pass this over in silence. . . .

It is true that Bulgarian Fascism is savage and barbarian. But the Bulgarian workers and peasants and the Bulgarian intelligentsia are clearly not savages and barbarians.

In the days when the German Emperor Charles V used to say that he talked German only to his horses, and the German nobility and intelligentsia wrote only in Latin and were ashamed of the German language, the Apostles Cyril and Methodius, in 'barbarous Bulgaria' created and disseminated the Bulgarian alphabet.

So, I protest against these attacks on the Bulgarian people. I have no reason to be ashamed of being a Bulgarian, and I am proud to be a son of the Bulgarian working class. . . .

Only Fascism is barbarous and savage in Bulgaria. But I ask you, Mr. President, in what country are Fascists not barbarous and savage?".

After another of his frequent clashes with the Presiding Judge, Dimitrov went on to the relatively humdrum task of demonstrating from the evidence the innocence of the four accused Communists, and

* Such behaviour, prohibited in all civilised courts, is oddly disconcerting to anyone trying to conduct a case, as I know from my experience of similar behaviour by similar audiences, before similar judges, in a British colony.

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then gave this expression to his own creed:

"It is true that for me . . . the supreme law is the programme of the Communist International, and the supreme court is the Control Commission of the Communist International. . . . Van der Lubbe is no Communist, no anarchist; he is just a tool misused by Fascism."

Finally, in his peroration, he said:

"The wheel of history moves forward. . . . And this wheel, driven by the proletariat under the leadership of the Communist International, will not be halted by any measure of extermination, any sentences of imprisonment or death. It is turning, and will go on turning, until the final victory of communism."

At this point, Dimitrov was forced back into his seat by the police, and the judges withdrew to consider whether he should be allowed to continue speaking. They returned with the decision that he could not.

After the four Communists had been acquitted, and van der Lubbe had been found guilty, sentenced to death, and beheaded, there followed a long dispute between Goering and one or two other hard-line Nazis who wanted to have Dimitrov shot "while trying to escape", and other Nazis who were afraid of foreign public opinion if he should not be released. In the end, he and his two comrades were released and flown to the USSR on February 27, 1934, the first anniversary of the Reichstag fire.

Thus did Dimitrov spend just under 12 months of his fruitful and eventful life in a magnificent, supremely difficult, and highly successful battle to vindicate communism and expose fascism. He lived on for a decade and a half to render still further service to the cause of mankind.

Documents of G. M. Dimitrov in Preparation for the 7th World Congress of the Communist International

We print below a number of documents of Georgi Dimitrov connected with the preparations of the 7th Congress of the International—his Letter to the Commission on the Second Point of the Congress Agenda, outline of his Report on "The Fascist Offensive and the Tasks of the Communist International in the Struggle of the Working Class against Fascism" and his intervention at the meeting of the commission.

The preparations of the 7th Congress began in the second half of 1934. Preparatory commissions were formed to prepare drafts of the Congress reports and decisions. Dimitrov, put in charge of the commission which was to prepare the second point of the agenda, worked out a general outline of his report and submitted it, along with an accompanying letter, for discussion by members of the commission.

Dimitrov believed that the central point of the 7th Congress should be the problem of the united front in the struggle against the fascist offensive, the struggle for the unity of the working class. Studying the experience of the working class in the struggle against fascism, Dimitrov raised the necessity of working out a new tactical line, of revising and correcting a number of the formulations and directives of the 6th Congress of the CI and of preceding Plenums. In particular he stressed the need to revise the estimation of social democracy as social fascism, and to reject an indiscriminate approach to social democracy as the main social bulwark of the bourgeoisie and to the left social democrats as the main danger.

Dimitrov saw the united front as the necessary means for mass struggle against the fascist offensive and for the creation of real workers' unity in the course of the struggle. He raised sharply the question of overcoming sectarianism, dogmatism, and the use of technical phrases. He put forward suggestions for changing the methods of work and leadership of the Communist International.

Dimitrov's proposals contained in his letter and in the outlines of his report of July 2, 1934 were discussed and approved by the commission. The commission gave special attention to questions of changing tactics in relation to the left social democrats and of the necessity of winning unity of action with them in the struggle against fascism. Dimitrov's letter, his intervention at the commission, together with the work of the commission, played a big role in the working out at the 7th Congress of a new political line, of strategy and tactics of struggle for the creation of a united proletarian front and a people's anti-fascist front.

Dimitrov's letter was first printed in 1962 in the book *Georgi Dimitrov—Letters 1905-1909* published in Sofia.

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It was published in No. 7, 1965, of the Soviet Journal *Voprosi Istorii KPSS* with an introduction by the Institute of Marxism-Leninism of the CC of the CPSU to which we are indebted and on which we have drawn in the preparation of this introductory note. We have used the footnotes prepared by V. M. Endakova and F. I. Firsov of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism with some abbreviations. The original documents are held by the Central Party Archives of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism.

I

Letter of G. M. Dimitrov to the Commission on the Second Point of the Congress Agenda.[1]

July 1, 1934.[2]

From the enclosed rough outline of the Report you will see how I conceive the character of the Report on the Second Point of the Congress Agenda. Besides this, I would like . . . to put the following questions:—

(1) **On Social Democracy.**

(i) Is the indiscriminate qualification of social democracy as social fascism[3] correct? With this position we often blocked the road to social democratic workers.

(ii) Is it correct always and under all circumstances to consider social democracy as the main social prop of the bourgeoisie?

(iii) Is it correct to consider all left s(ocial) d(emocrat) groups under all circumstances as the main danger?

(iv) Is the indiscriminate interpretation correct of all leading cadres of s(ocial) d(emocratic) parties and of reformist trade unions as conscious betrayers of the working class? Or is it not to be expected that in the process of struggle, along with s(ocial) d(emocratic) workers, no small part of the present responsible functionaries of the s(ocial) d(emocratic) parties and reformist trade unions should pass over to a revolutionary road; is it not in our interest to make such a passage easier for them and in this way also to accelerate the passage of s(ocial) d(emocratic) workers to our side?

(v) Is is not time to give up useless discussions on the possibility or impossibility of winning over the reformist trade unions instead of clearly putting before their members the task of transforming these trade unions into weapons of the class struggle and of the proletariat?

(vi) The question of uniting the revolutionary and reformist trade unions without posing as a preliminary condition the hegemony of the Communist Party.

(2) **On the United Front.**

(i) The necessity in connection with the changing situation of changing our tactic of the united front. Instead of applying it exclusively as a manoeuvre for the exposure of social democracy without serious efforts to create the actual unity of the workers in struggle, we should transform it into a real factor for the development of real struggle against the offensive of fascism.

(ii) The necessity to make an end of the attitude that the united front should only be developed from below, and to stop considering as opportunism any approach at the same time to the leadership of the s(ocial) d(emocratic) party.

(iii) The necessity of developing the militant initiative of the masses without petty domination by the Communist Party in relation to the organs of the united front; not to *make declarations* of the hegemony

[1] The following were included by the Political Secretariat of the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI) on June 3, 1934, amongst the members of the Commission for the Preparation of the Second Point of the 7th Congress Agenda:—
G. M. Dimitrov, I. A. Piatnitsky, T. B. Smolyansky, A. A. Kostanyan, F. Heckert, M. Maddalena, B. Shmeral, S. I. Gopner.
The Commission meeting of July 2, 1934, was attended by:—
G. M. Dimitrov, S. A. Lozovky, I. A. Piatnitsky, V. G. Knorin, O. V. Kuusinen, F. Heckert, A. A. Kostanyan, E. S. Varga, M. Maddalena and P. A. Shubin.

[2] Dated on the basis of the distribution of the outlines of the Report to the members of the commission.

[3] The estimation of social democracy as "social fascism" was widespread in documents of the Communist International and of the Communist Parties at the end of the '20's and the beginning of the '30's.
In the Theses of the 10th Plenum of ECCI (July 1929) social democracy as a whole was characterised as social-fascism, as a special form of fascism in the countries of traditional social democratic parties. The identification of social democracy and fascism—phenomena differing from one another in their aims, social nature and mass basis—was an obstacle to the creation of unity of action between communists and social democrats, made difficult the isolation of the right wing reformist leaders and hindered the establishment of co-operation with the left socialists.
The estimation of social democracy as "social fascism" weakened the position of the Communist Parties amongst the masses, made it more easy for the right wing social democrats to carry out a policy of splitting the working class movement, made more difficult the organisation of struggle against the threat of fascism and war. The practice of the class struggle, the spreading of the anti-fascist movement, above all in France, Austria and Spain, helped the overcoming of this incorrect estimation. A big role in this connection was played by G. M. Dimitrov in the first intervention in the leadership of the Comintern calling for the overcoming of sectarian mistakes.

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of the Communist Party but make a *reality* of Communist Party leadership.

(iv) It is necessary radically to change our approach to s(ocial) d(emocratic) and non-Party workers in all our mass work, agitation and progapanda. It is essential not to confine ourselves to general statements about the betrayal of social democracy, but concretely, patiently, armed with arguments, to explain to the workers where the social democratic policy of collaboration with the bourgeoisie will lead, and where it has already led. We must not put all the blame on the s(ocial) d(emocratic) leaders, but also show the responsibility of the s(ocial) d(emocratic) workers themselves, compel them to think about their own responsibility and look for the correct road of struggle etc.

(3) **On the Leadership of the Comintern.**

It is necessary to change the methods of work and leadership of the Comintern, realising that it is impossible to give operative leadership from Moscow on all questions to all the 65 sections of the Comintern that exist in the most diverse conditions (parties in the metropolitan and colonial countries, parties in highly developed industrial countries and parties in mainly peasant countries, legal and illegal parties etc.)

It is necessary to concentrate attention on the general political leadership of the Communist Movement, on helping the Communist Parties in fundamental political and tactical problems, in the creation of a firm Bolshevik leadership in the Communist Parties on the spot, and in strengthening the work of the Communist Parties at the expense of the cumbersome bureaucratic apparatus of ECCI.

A greater development of Bolshevik self-criticism is necessary, from fear of which big political questions at times remain unclarified (questions of the present stage of the crisis and of the so-called war-inflationary conjuncture, the estimation and lessons of the Austrian events[4] etc.).

A change in the methods and leadership and work of the Comintern cannot take place without a partial renewal of the cadres of the workers of the Comintern.

Specially necessary is a close relationship between the leadership of the Comintern and of the Political Bureau of the CPSU(B).

[4] An armed struggle of the Austrian proletariat took place against fascist detachments and government troops in February 1934. In reply to an attack by the fascists and police against the *Workers' House* on February 12, the workers in Linz, organised in detachments of the Social Democratic Party—the Schutzbund—organised armed resistance. The example of the Linz workers was followed by workers of Vienna and other Austrian towns. The battle continued until February 15. Communists and social democrats fought shoulder to shoulder on the barricades.

II

Outline of the Report "The Offensive of Fascism and the Tasks of the Communist International in the Struggle for Unity of the Working Class against Fascism."

July 1, 1934

(1) **The Characteristics of Fascism.**

(i) Fascism is an attempt to find a way out of the crisis of capitalism, as a weapon in the struggle against the proletarian revolution and in the preparation of imperialist wars. Fascism and bourgeois democracy.

(ii) On what is fascism based; the reasons for its growth in different countries (Italian fascism, German fascism, fascism in Poland and in the Balkans, the fascist movement in France, Great Britain, USA and Japan).

(iii) The national and social demagogy of fascism. Nationalism, "the unity of the nation", the apology for war, anti-capitalist slogans, corporatism, "national revolution", "national socialism", anti-semitism.

(iv) Fascism's attempt at the bribery of a section of the working people by economic and social measures (especially at the moment of seizure of power). The policy of fascism in relation to the workers, unemployed, youth, petty bourgeoisie, peasantry and intelligentsia.

(v) The organisation of fascism. The party, corporate organisations, militarised sports organisations, etc.

(vi) Why the victory of fascism is not inevitable.

(2) **The Position of the Masses before Fascist Power and under a Fascist Regime.**

The concrete forms of fascist offensive against the working class and its organisations, against the peasant masses, the petty bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia. Fascism as social, political and cultural reaction.

(3) **The International Influence of the Victory of Fascism in Germany.**

(i) The victory of fascism in Germany as a factor strengthening the offensive of fascism in other countries.

(ii) The fascist regime in Germany has a clear lesson for the proletariat of all countries,

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showing what is meant by the threat of fascism.

(iii) Movements in the working class, crisis of social democracy and unprecedented strengthening of the yearning for unity of the working masses.

(4) **The United Front of the Proletariat—Road to the Victory over Fascism.**

(i) What is the united front and how can it be achieved? How and why did the split take place?

(ii) A critical analysis of the experience of the application of the tactics of the united front. Why did we not succeed in achieving the united front of the working class in the struggle against fascism in Germany before Hitler came to power?

(iii) Social democracy and fascism. The question of social fascism. Our relationship to social democracy in the period of the offensive of fascism. The question of the main social prop of the bourgeoisie. The developing differentiation in the ranks of soc(ial) democracy and our relationship to its different strata. The necessity of a differentiated approach in the estimation of the different soc(ial) dem(ocratic) parties and organisations and leading s(ocial) d(emocratic) cadres. Our relationship to the "left" s(ocial) d(emocratic) organisations that refuse to attempt conciliation with the bourgeoisie and take the road of revolutionary struggle.

(iv) Our relationship to anarcho-syndicalists and other non-communist working class organisations.

(v) The tactics of united front from above and below. The conditions for the economic and political platform and organisational forms of the united front.

(vi) The united front in the trade union movement. The possibility of and conditions for the common struggle and unification of the revolutionary and reformist trade unions on a platform of struggle against the offensive of fascism.

(vii) Our tactics in electoral campaigns in relation to s(ocial) d(emocratic) and other non-communist organisations of the working people. The possibility of common lists and under what conditions.

(viii) Our relation to the different strata of the petty bourgeoisie.

(ix) From the proletarian unity front to the unity of the working class. On what basis is the unity of the working class possible.

(4) **Tasks of the Communist Parties in the Struggle against the Offensive of Fascism.**

(i) The decisive importance of the revolutionary party of the proletariat in the struggle against fascism.

(ii) The basic slogans of the Communist Parties in the struggle against fascism.

(iii) The concrete exposure of the ideology of fascism, its national and social demagogy.

(iv) Reorganisation of all the mass work of the Communist Parties and of all their agitation and propaganda from the point of view of the fight against fascism. C(ommunist) P(arties) and their work in the mass organisations of the proletariat (especially in the trade unions) as the weapon of the united front of struggle against fascism.

(v) Struggle for the youth.

(vi) Work in the fascist organisations.

(vii) Organisations of mass self-defence.

III

The Intervention of G. M. Dimitrov on July 2, 1934, at the Meeting of the Commission on the Second Point of the Congress Agenda.

Comrades, as a result of my bad health I am somewhat late in convening this commission. But I have, nevertheless, already taken certain steps in the preparation of material for my report to the 7th Congress.

How I myself see the character of my report, you will certainly know from the outline which has been distributed. It was, of course, only a first rough sketch, but I noted there what basic questions had to be posed, elucidated and solved at the 7th Congress under the second point on the agenda. I think that we can exchange opinions on the outline, and also on the methods of preparatory work for the report and the resolution.

I would like to make some explanatory remarks in connection with this outline. It seems to me that the fundamental political problem that stands before the Communist International—and, therefore, before the 7th Congress—is the problem of the proletarian united front in the struggle against the offensive of fascism, the problem of the struggle for the unity of the working class. In my opinion, as this problem must be the central point of discussion and decision of the 7th Congress of the Communist International, our main attention must be concentrated on its many-sided discussion and correct solution. And therefore the Communist International must boldly undertake in its whole line and in its initiative on every front, the task of creating the necessary unity of the working class against the offensive of fascism, against the danger of war, in the struggle against capitalism.

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If on the first point of the agenda the main task will be the analysis of the position, and, on the basis of this concrete analysis of position, the study of the changes which have taken place since the time of the 6th Congress,[5] and the formulation of the general political line of the Comintern, then I consider that the main task for the second point of the Congress agenda must be the tactical line, tactical questions, the tactics of the Communist International and of our Communist Parties, all the more because, as is known (and you agree with this) the weakest aspect of the work of our parties is in the field of tactics; the greatest confusion, in my opinion, also exists in the field of tactical questions.

It seems to me that, in relation to the changing position, especially since the victory of fascism in Germany, and studying our experience since the time of the 6th Congress, we have to review and change certain formulations, tactical lines, and, possibly, certain positions which are not altogether clear.

What is it necessary to change? How and in what direction must we make this change? In my opinion this depends on the concrete study of the actual position and condition of our parties and other organisations, on the concrete study of questions of our tactics and methods of mass work and of the leadership of the Communist Parties in the mass movement, and also on the study and estimate of our experience since the time of the 6th Congress, especially in the last years and still more especially in connection with the victory of fascism in Germany and the influence of this victory of fascism in Germany on other countries.

I think, therefore, that the review of the estimation of our tactics, our line, of our methods of work, must be completed boldly and painlessly on the basis of our experience of the most recent events, and, I would say, not considering ourselves bound hand and foot by existing tactical lines. What must be changed must be changed. What must be corrected must be corrected as quickly as possible. In other words we must, in an all-round way, make use of what is positive and negative in our experience of the last years and of the most recent period.

I have in mind first of all our relation to social democracy, to the reformist trade unions and to other non-communist working class organisations, organisations of the working people. I have in mind here our approach to the social democratic working masses and to the masses of other non-communist organisations. I have in mind still more concretely, our tactics of the united front and the application of these tactics in different countries.

I think that we shall also be agreed that, on the basis of our own experience, we shall see how formalism and stereotyped phrases frequently substitute for Marxist analysis. General formulae and blue-prints are substituted without taking account of the specific character of each country, of each party and organisation. This does us very much harm; it has prevented us in a very large measure from drawing broad masses of the working class and working people into revolutionary struggle under our leadership. Besides everything else, the 7th Congress must say something new in the most authoritative way, plainly and clearly, so that our parties and the working class of all countries can understand what action to take on the problems of the communist movement.

I consider that the First[6] and Second Commissions of the Congress agenda have very many common questions, and I think that, in this preparatory work, we must establish the closest contact between the First and Second Commissions.

These are the remarks, comrades, which I wanted to make.

[5] The 6th Congress of the Communist International was held at Moscow from July 17—September 1, 1928. 58 Communist Parties and eight working class organisations were represented.

[6] He means the commission formed under the leadership of O. V. Kuusinen for the preparation of the first point on the 7th Congress agenda—an account of the activity of ECCI.

The Political Secretariat of ECCI on June 3 formed this commission of:—

O. V. Kuusinen, V. Pieck, V. G. Knorin, Wan Min, D. Z. Manuilsky, I. A. Piatnitsky, G. M. Dimitrov, E. S. Varga, S. A. Lozovsky, Bela Kun, B. Bronkosvky (B. B. Bortnovsky), A. Vassar, R. McIlhone, P. A. Shubin, G. Lorents (S. E. Shchutkin), L. Madyar and G. Sinani (G. B. Skalov). Ercoli (P. Togliatti) and F. Heckert also took part in the work of the commission.

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Georgi Dimitrov and the 7th Congress of the Communist International

Part I

James Klugmann

The Seventh Congress of the Communist International, held in Moscow from July 26 to August 20, 1935, marked a radical turn in the history of the whole International, in its strategy and tactics, and in its methods of work. The preparation and carrying through of the Congress were certainly the fruit of prolonged collective work, but no man contributed more to bringing about this turn than the great Bulgarian and world Communist leader—Georgi Dimitrov.

It was necessary to concentrate the struggle of the working class and working people against the *main enemy*—fascism—and against the threat of aggressive war which was an integral part of fascism, and deeply to understand the nature of the enemy. It was necessary, in order to bar the road to fascism and to defeat it where it had been victorious, to bring about in each country and on a world scale the unity of the working class and, around the working class, the unity of all those who could be won to the struggle against fascism and war. In so doing and in order successfully so to do, it was necessary to shed all sectarian methods and approaches in the work of the communists themselves.

Within this mesh of inter-connected problems that faced the working class and people of the world *the problem of unity stood at the very centre*. In Dimitrov's own words, speaking at the Commission on the second point of the Congress agenda, which met on July 2, 1934, a year before the opening of the Congress:

> "It seems to me that the fundamental political problem that stands before the Communist International—and, therefore, the Seventh Congress—is the problem of the proletarian united front in the struggle against the offensive of fascism, the problem of the struggle for the unity of the working class."

Dimitrov's Experience

Dimitrov's whole life and experience prepared him for the role that he was to play at the Seventh Congress.

He was one of those communists who were amongst the first to experience the full rigour and ruthlessness of fascist rule. With Vassil Kolarov he was the first to lead an armed uprising against it. As his articles of August 1923 so clearly showed, already in those days of the early twenties he was reflecting deeply on the nature and class origins of fascism, had come the hard way to understand its anti-popular nature, to see that its threat was directed not just against communists, but against *all* progressive people—socialists, agrarians, trade unionists intellectuals. He could bear witness to how, with ultra-nationalist slogans, Bulgarian fascism betrayed the nation.

Above all he had come to understand the need for working class unity and for a broad unity of the working people around the working class. His bitter experience of the fruits of disunity strengthened the deep striving for unity that stirred within him.

Also his long trade union experience helped him to understand the necessity for working class unity. He learnt in his work to deal with real, living people at different levels of social consciousness and to abhor stereotyped phrases.

In 1923 he came to work in the Communist International and in various positions in the international working class movement. He experienced all that was good and noble in the work of the International of those days and also its shortcomings and errors.

There was very much that was positive and fine in the role of the Comintern in the decade that preceded the Seventh Congress. It fought for Marxism-Leninism; combated the disastrous policy of retreat and class conciliation of the Second International and its sections (which in Britain took the form of Mondism and MacDonaldism). It radically opposed the conception (known as Fordism) that the world had entered a new period of prosperity, and forecast the forthcoming capitalist crisis. It fought consistently against imperialism, colonialism, and in support of the struggle of the

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colonial people for national independence. Amidst a barrage of capitalist falsification it made known the achievements of the Soviet Union, whose economic advance stood out in clear relief against the capitalist crisis, and called for the defence of the USSR against imperialist aggression. It warned repeatedly against the threat of fascism when the Second International was making light of it. It strove continuously to give the working class a deep class sense, a class solidarity, a class approach to things.

But within this context, and they should *only* be seen within this context, there were also some deep weaknesses and errors, mainly of a sectarian nature. The fact that these arose in part in reaction against the class conciliation and betrayal of the reformist leaders helps to explain but does not justify these errors, which we can only touch on here.

Attitudes to Unity and Sectarian Errors

Already at the Fifth Congress of the Communist International, Zinoviev (one of those leaders of the Comintern, who at that time took a very sectarian position), claimed that the united front was "only a method of propaganda and of mobilising the masses, a manoeuvre . . ." and suggested "that the main blow be directed against social democracy, and, more particularly, against the left wing of social democracy." Zinoviev equated the slogan of a workers' and peasants' government with the government arising from a fully socialist revolution, as a "pseudonym", as he called it, of the dictatorship of the proletariat, instead of its orginal conception as a form of transition government on the road to socialist revolution.[1]

The strategy and tactics that became known as "class against class" emerged at the end of 1927, and were adopted at the Ninth Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI) in February 1928. Whilst their aim was to develop an approach (so desperately needed at that period) independent of the bourgeoisie and bourgeois ideology, they tended to assume that reformist-led organisations were as a whole and for ever on the side of the bourgeoisie. They regarded the Social Democratic Parties as third parties of the bourgeoisie, and tended to make no distinctions between their leaders and the mass of their members, to adopt the fatalist attitude that members and leaders alike were "permanent" reactionaries, lost, uninfluenceable, not subject to change either through the experience of events, nor through the education of struggle, nor to conviction by Marxism—an attitude that led to passivity, acceptance, self-complacency, and extreme isolation.[2]

The Tenth Plenum of ECCI in July 1929 described social democracy as social fascism, and in so doing deepened sectarianism. Such a formulation contained something quite different from the correct and necessary warning that reformist theory and practice opened the way to the advance of fascism. It underestimated the strength of resistance to fascism arising within the Social Democratic Parties, made it much harder for communists to assist the development of such resistance, and contributed towards an underestimation of the special danger constituted by fascism itself. The Plenum described the left-wing of social democracy as the most dangerous enemy of communism in the labour movement and the main obstacle to the growth of the militant activities of the mass of the workers, an approach which was wide open to complete confusion between a number of "phoney" left groupings and genuine left-moving workers who could and should be close allies in the development of unity.

Despite the advance of the fascist offensive similar sectarian errors were still being made at the Eleventh Plenum of ECCI in March-April 1931. Particularly dangerous precisely in view of the fascist offensive was the blurring of the distinction between bourgeois-democracy and fascism. It was necessary to put an end, it was stated, to the practice of drawing a line "between fascism and bourgeois democracy and between the parliamentary form of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and its open fascist form."[3] Such approaches tended towards under-estimation of the threat of fascism and what it meant for the working people, and formed in practice a serious obstacle to the development of working class and popular unity against fascism's attack in every aspect of democratic life, against all democratic rights that had been, over long decades, won in painful struggle against capitalism.

In the period 1927-1932 sectarian approaches were particularly rife inside RILU, the Red International of Labour Unions. There was a tendency to *identify* the apparatus of the reformist-led trade unions with the apparatus of the capitalist state, to accept the aim of the capitalists to incorporate the unions into the capitalist system as something already achieved and irreversible, to reject the capacity of the militant workers to change these trends, to reverse them, and to transform these unions from centres of class conciliation to centres of class struggle.

It is necessary to study deeply the work of the Communist International in the decade that preceded the Seventh Congress and to see the serious

[1] See B. M. Leibson and K. K. Shirinya—*Turn in the Policy of the Communist International* (in Russian), Moscow, 1965, pp. 39-40.

[2] See for discussion of some of the weaknesses of the C.I. in this period A. I. Sobolev, K. K. Shirinya and others—*Outline History of the Communist International*, Moscow, 1972, pp. 269-270, 291-292, 313, etc.

[3] *Eleventh Plenum of ECCI: Theses, Resolutions, Decisions*, Moscow 1931, p. 9.

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errors in the correct context of great achievement and reformist betrayal. Such a study is not possible in this short article. But it is essential in a few words to indicate weaknesses that then prevailed, because without some knowledge of them it would be impossible both to appreciate the profound turn made by the Seventh Congress, and of Dimitrov's contribution towards it.

Leipzig and Unity

Working in the apparatus of the Communist International Dimitrov was of course not free from its errors. But his whole background fired him with a sense of the danger of fascism and the necessity of unity. Step by step, he came ever more clearly to see that unity was imperative. He became one of those who, within the organisation of the International, most resisted the sectarian trends. In the Amsterdam Movement and the World Committee against War and Fascism he made personal contact with socialists and anti-fascists and worked with them, breaking down barriers, and winning their admiration and respect.

At the Reichstag Trial he stood out as the great protagonist of unity against fascism. His name came to stand for working class and popular unity, and the very unity which, throughout the world, his courageous defence helped to create, in its turn became a major factor in securing his release.

Released from imprisonment Dimitrov returned as active as ever to his work in the International, fired still more strongly, if it is possible, with the need for working class unity against the fascist threat, a man of a great political stature based on the support of workers throughout the world. The fight for unity became his overriding passion imbuing every facet of his many-sided political work. He felt both the need and the strength to strive against every form of weakness within the international communist movement, especially sectarianism, that could in any way weaken the unity cause.

Nothing reveals this more clearly than his letter of July 1, 1934 to the Commission on the Second Point of the Seventh Congress Agenda, which, along with the outlines of his forthcoming Report and the text of his intervention at this Commission on July 2, we print in this issue of *Marxism Today*.

Probing Questions

The letter shows very clearly how strong was Dimitrov's sense of the absolute necessity of achieving working class unity against fascism, and already a year before the opening of the Seventh Congress, how deeply he felt the need to shed all sectarian approaches and make of the Congress a turning point in the history of the International.

His own attitudes are revealed in the probing questions that he so bluntly poses.

Is it correct to define social democracy as social fascism? Does this definition not block the road to unity with workers still under the influence of reformism and hide the real threat and nature of fascism itself? Is it correct to see social democracy as the main danger or to regard the leaders of reformist-led parties and trade unions as *conscious* betrayers of the working class?

Is it not time to renounce a useless discussion on the possibility or impossibility of winning the reformist trade unions, and instead to concentrate all efforts on transforming these unions into weapons of the class struggle serving the working class?

Is it not essential to throw out all that remains of the sectarian conception of the united front as a sort of manoeuvre to expose the reformists, and to see it and transform it into a real factor for the development of struggle against fascism?

Is it not necessary to cease confusing a general and necessary explanation of how and why a reformist outlook leads to betrayal with indiscriminate condemnation of all workers influenced by reformist ideas, to combine the explanation of the nature and fruits of reformism with a patient effort to win workers still influenced by it into united action, the united front?

Is it not necessary to examine the methods of work and leadership of the International and not to be afraid of self-criticism?

One year before the opening of the Seventh Congress Dimitrov was posing the questions that Congress would have to face, and to which he would have to reply in his own report. He was not of course alone in putting these questions. At the commission there was considerable discussion on Dimitrov's letter and report, and it marked a significant point in the preparation of the Congress as a whole.[4]

Togliatti (working then under the name of Ercoli) was one of those in the leadership of the International who came to understand how great an obstacle sectarianism was to the achieving of working class unity against fascism. In the journal *Communist International* on the very eve of the opening of the Congress in July 1935, he wrote:

"Let us say perfectly openly that in the past the

[4] Sobolev, Shirinya etc. in the *Outline History of the Communist International* write that Dimitrov's proposals "met with a warm response" (p. 358). They mention that comrades like Bela Kun, Lozovsky, Knorin and Wan Min at first defended aspects of the previous tactics. D. Michev in an essay on "Georgi Dimitrov and the Revolutionary Movement in Germany, 1933-35" in the book by Sobolev and others "*Georgi Dimitrov, Outstanding Leader of the Communist Movement*" (in Russian), Moscow, 1972, pp. 318-319, states that Dimitrov was supported in the commission by Manuilsky, Kuusinen Maddalena (of the Communist Party of Germany) and others and opposed by Knorin and Pyatnitsky.

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tendency very often prevailed of regarding every united front action from a very narrow point of view, and that the united front policy of the Comintern was often understood and operated in a sectarian fashion and exceptionally formally.

The consequences of the policy of class collaboration and the influence of reformism in the ranks of the working class were such that they objectively fed the sectarian sentiments among our comrades. But we were also to blame since we did not always succeed in opportunely finding the necessary forms and the corresponding slogans to enable us to come closer to the masses of social democratic workers and to unite with them in struggle."[5]

Practical Lessons

At the end of February 1934 the German fascists, yielding to world pressure, released Dimitrov from gaol and he plunged into the struggle against fascism and war.

In the year and a half that preceded the Seventh Congress important events were taking place in the working class movement. The threat of fascism spread to many countries. In Austria where there was a great Social Democratic Party on which the Second International laid high hopes, the workers were defeated in armed struggle in February 1934. The fruits of social democratic policy and of the rejection of unity were all too visible.

But in France things passed in a very different fashion. The French Communist Party provided a magnificent example of how working class unity could bar the road to fascism, and how a united working class could rally around itself broad sections of the peasantry, petty-bourgeoisie and intellectuals. The united front of the working class laid the basis for a broad popular front against fascism, reaction, war. In the great Popular Front demonstration of July 14, 1935, held on the eve of the Seventh Congress, half a million marched from the Place de la Bastille to the Place de la République. By this time the Communist Party had over 70,000 members and the Young Communist League had grown to five times its previous strength in the course of a single year. Both communists *and* socialists, joined in unity, increased in strength. The stage was set for trade union unity too.

The year 1934 and the first half of 1935 saw great struggles in China and the emergence of the Chinese Communist Party at the head of a broad anti-imperialist front against Japanese imperialism. There were bitter battles in Spain, especially in the Asturias. In Britain the united front began quite rapidly to develop from below. On September 9, 1934, when Oswald Mosley had announced his intention of parading his blackshirts through Hyde Park, 150,000 workers answered the appeal of the Communist Party to "drown Mosley in a sea of working class activity". Early in 1935 a high point of struggle was reached, particularly in the mining valleys of South Wales, of united struggle against the Unemployment Act of the National Government.

Whilst Dimitrov, as a member of ECCI, was contributing throughout this period to the development of the strategy and tactics of unity, he was also learning from the experience of the international struggle, from defeats as in Austria, and from victories as in France. He defended strongly in the International the new approaches of the French Communists.

When Congress opened he seemed virtually to embody this new surge to unity which at Leipzig he had come to symbolise, and which was spreading throughout the world.

Now was the time to give this impulse, drive, surge to working class, popular, anti-imperialist unity against fascism, imperialism, war, strong organisational forms and a clear theoretical consciousness.

Dimitrov Reports

The Seventh Congress of the Communist International opened in Moscow on July 5, 1935, and remained in session until August 25. The International was, at that date, composed of 76 parties and organisations, 19 with the status of sympathisers. Its strength was growing. In the seven years that preceded the Congress membership in the capitalist countries had risen from 445,000 to 785,000 (with the Young Communist International rising from 127,000 to 221,000). In many countries terror and ruthless dictatorships reigned. Only 22 Communist Parties (11 in Europe) were able to exist and carry on their activities in legal or semi-legal conditions.

The Congress was attended by 513 delegates representing 65 Communist Parties and a number of affiliated international organisations. There were six main items on the agenda—the Report of W. Pieck on "The Activities of ECCI", the Report of Angaretis on "The Work of the International Control Commission", Dimitrov's Report on "The Fascist Offensive and the Tasks of the Communist International in the Fight for the Unity of the Working Class against Fascism", the Report of Ercoli (Togliatti) on "Preparations for Imperialist War and the Tasks of the Communist International", Manuilsky's Report on "The Results of Socialist Construction in the USSR", and the election of the leading committees.

[5] *Communist International* (in English), No. 16, 1935. The original (in German and Russian) was printed *before* the Congress. The article, signed Ercoli, was entitled "Problems of the United Front".

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Fascism Defined

Dimitrov took as the basis of his Report the definition of fascism in power, elaborated at the 13th Plenum of ECCI (held in November-December 1933), as "*the open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic and most imperialist elements of finance capitalism*". And the most reactionary variety of fascism, he said, is the German type, which has the effrontery to call itself national-socialism, though with socialism it has nothing whatever in common.

The 6th Congress of the CI had, already in 1928, pointed out that the threat of fascism was not confined to any particular country or area of the capitalist world—"in a more or less developed form, fascist tendencies and the germs of a fascist movement are to be found almost everywhere". Dimitrov sharpened the warning that there is no country free from the fascist danger, and described the barbarous attacks of fascism on the working people in Germany and other fascist countries against every aspect of freedom which they had, in struggle, achieved.

Fascism, he made clear, was the *principal* threat, the *main* danger to the working class and working people all over the world. It must be quite clearly distinguished from other types of capitalist rule. Those communists in Germany who had, for instance, described the Bruening Government as a *fascist* dictatorship, were wrong. Fascism is of a different quality:

> "The accession to power of fascism is not an *ordinary succession* of one bourgeois government by another, but a *substitution* of one state form of class domination of the bourgeoisie—bourgeois democracy—by another form open terrorist dictatorship."[6]

Different Forms

No capitalist country was free from the danger of fascism. But this did not mean, explained Dimitrov, that fascism would everywhere develop *in the same form:*

> "The development of fascism, and the fascist dictatorship itself assume *different forms* in different countries, according to historical, social and economic conditions and to the national peculiarities and the international condition of a given country".[7]

This was very important and *still is*. Each Communist Party had (and has) to study with the greatest care, the history of its own country, its political development, class relationships, the development of reactionary parties and groups and ideology, their attacks on freedom, their racialist, chauvinist and other reactionary trends, their attempts to divide the working people, their connection with monopoly capitalism, sources of finance, particular lines of demagogy, in order to discover along what particular lines, in what particular form, fascism threatens to advance. Only with such knowledge can action be taken against each particular step in the direction of fascism, and only by combating each particular step can fascism be defeated.

Dimitrov's Report thus avoided two dangers. On the one hand it sharply rejected the conception that there were certain "privileged" countries free from the danger of fascism—the argument "it can't happen here". On the other, equally firmly rejected was the idea of some generalised abstract blueprint of fascism or of some standard process of moving in the direction of fascism (fascisation).

(This article will be completed in the August issue of *Marxism Today*.)

(completed from p. 221)

development and mechanisation of Bulgarian farming."

His Ideas in Practice

In giving the final characteristic features of people's democracy and the people's democratic government, Georgi Dimitrov pointed out that they both stood for internationalism. "Nationalism is incompatible with people's democracy," he said, "because it is a tool of capitalism, of capitalist reaction." In this connection he also set the task of educating the working people in a spirit of proletarian internationalism and loyalty to their country, which means in a spirit of genuine patriotism.

The definition of people's democracy and the people's democratic state, given by Georgi Dimitrov at the Fifth Congress of the Bulgarian Communist Party is no doubt a great theoretical contribution to the theory of Marxism-Leninism. At the same time, however, Georgi Dimitrov's ideas on the character, role and future of people's democracy and the people's democratic state have served as directives in the practical activities of the Bulgarian Communist Party and of all working people in the People's Republic of Bulgaria. On the basis of the principles formulated by him, large revolutionary changes took place in the country, which secured its major successes in socialist construction.

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[6] Dimitrov's *Report* published with other articles under the title *The United Front*, Lawrence and Wishart, 1938, p. 12. All other page references to Dimitrov's speeches at the 7th Congress will be given from this volume. His opening Report will be referred to as *Report*, his reply to discussion as *Reply*, and his speech at the end of the Congress as *Concluding Speech*.

[7] Dimitrov *Report*, p. 7.

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Georgi Dimitrov on The People's Democratic State

Boris Spassov

Professor Boris Spassov is head of the Department of Constitutional Law of Sofia University and President of the Bulgarian National Union of Lawyers. He took an active part in drafting the new Bulgarian Constitution which was adopted by the National Assembly in 1971.

We are now celebrating the 90th anniversary of the birth of Georgi Dimitrov, the eminent Bulgarian leader, great revolutionary, political figure, theoretician and organiser of the revolutionary struggle of the Bulgarian and the world proletariat. Georgi Dimitrov was active in many fields. Alongside the practical work done by him as party and state leader and Secretary General of the Comintern he contributed much to the solution of a number of important theoretical problems and to their practical elucidation. Of particular importance in this respect was the work he did on the problem of people's democracy and the people's democratic state.

Origins of the Idea

The idea of a people's democracy and its practical implementation in a number of countries was the result of the collective efforts of the Communist Parties. It is generally acknowledged, however, that it was Georgi Dimitrov who most thoroughly and precisely elucidated the nature, role and future of people's democracy. This, by the way, was due, above all, to the fact that a number of ideas developed and advocated by Georgi Dimitrov for many years, including the period when he was Secretary General of the Comintern, found their realisation in the people's democratic form of socialist government.

As a matter of fact, as leader of the revolutionary struggle of the Bulgarian proletariat against capitalism and fascism and as government leader of socialist Bulgaria, Georgi Dimitrov applied in practice the idea of rallying all anti-fascist and anti-imperialist forces into united fronts, of strengthening the union of workers, peasants and people's intelligentsia, under the leadership of the working class. And it was, above all, upon his revolutionary experience with the formation of a worker-peasant alliance in Bulgaria in 1923, at the time of the first anti-fascist uprising in the world, that this concept was based.

At its foundations lay also the revolutionary practice of the French proletariat, as well as the experience of the working class in other countries. Besides, Georgi Dimitrov's strategic policy was based on Lenin's idea of the dialectical link between the struggle for democracy and the struggle for socialism. The changed historical circumstances which broadened the social basis of the revolution, brought its general democratic and its socialist tasks closer together, thus creating conditions for including into the united ranks of the fighters both workers and peasants, as well as representatives of the people's intelligentsia and even part of the bourgeoisie—people of different social standing, but with a similar ideology and goals.

The Fatherland Front

The policy aimed at rallying all anti-fascist and anti-imperialist forces found a practical expression in the creation of united and popular fronts in a number of countries. On the initiative of Georgi Dimitrov, a Fatherland Front was established in Bulgaria during the Second World War, at the height of the popular struggle against capitalism, fascism and the Nazi invaders. It rallied in its ranks all sound forces of the people, and developed into a nation-wide struggle to extend the scope of the people's resistance and to transform it into a mass popular movement. After the victory of the revolution on September 9, 1944 the Fatherland Front became the largest public and political organisation of the Bulgarian people.

The idea of rallying the anti-fascist and anti-imperialist forces into popular fronts (or fatherland fronts) gained popularity in many countries during the Second World War. It attained its supreme manifestation in the people's democratic revolutions and in the creation of *People's Democratic States* in a number of countries in Europe, Asia and Latin America, which embarked on the socialist road.

Prior to the Second World War, the only form of proletarian dictatorship, of socialist state power, was that of the soviets. After the Second World War the people's democratic socialist states came into being. This process, as Georgi Dimitrov pointed out, was based on the existence of the powerful Soviet Union and its victory over the forces of German fascism in the Second World War. The emergence of the

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people's democratic states was achieved as a result of the successful struggle of the people in the different countries under the leadership of the working class, led by its political vanguard, the respective Communist Parties.

Nature of People's Democracy

At the Fifth Congress of the Bulgarian Communist Party (December, 1948) Georgi Dimitrov gave a scientific description of the characteristic features of people's democracy and of the people's democratic state. In this connection he not only revealed its features but, above all, elucidated the nature of state power in the people's democratic countries. "The transfer of state power from one class to another is the first, main and basic feature of revolution both in the strictly scientific and in the practical political meaning of the word" (V. I. Lenin, Works, vol. 31, p. 133). Proceeding from this general formula, Georgi Dimitrov pointed out that the people's democratic state was the power of the working people—the overwhelming majority of the people, with the leading role played by the working class. In this way he defined, in the first place, the *type of the state* as a socialist one. In the conditions of people's democracy, Georgi Dimitrov pointed out, the political domination of the capitalists and big landowners is eliminated, and a government of the working people from town and country is established under the leadership of the working class, which is the most progressive class in modern society.

Transitional Period

At the same time, Georgi Dimitrov defined the *social function* of the people's democratic state, pointing out that it serves as a weapon in the struggle of the working people against the exploiters, against all attempts at and tendencies towards the restoration of the capitalist system. This brings out the essential difference between the people's democratic state which is a socialist government, and the various types of exploiter governments. Marxist-Leninist theory has established that an exploiter state is an instrument for oppressing the overwhelming majority of the people by a minority of exploiters. The people's democratic state, like any socialist state, serves the people and contributes to the attainment of the goals of the socialist revolution.

In describing the people's democratic state Georgi Dimitrov also noted that it was a state of the *transitional period* between capitalism and socialism. Marx came to the theoretical conclusion, which was confirmed by the political practice of all socialist countries, that there was a period of transition between capitalism and socialism. During this period the people's democratic state performs the function of securing the development of the country along the road to socialism. In this connection Georgi Dimitrov pointed out that although the capitalists and the big land-owners had been overthrown from power as a result of the victory of the people's uprising, and the ownership of this class had become people's ownership, the economic roots of capitalism had not yet been fully done away with. That is why capitalist elements had remained in existence and were seeking to restore their domination. The people's democratic state therefore had to suppress and remove the capitalist elements from society.

That the period of transition is only a stage in the development of the people's democratic state was proved by the social development of the People's Republic of Bulgaria. First of all, the foundations of socialism in the country were built up as a result of a number of major successes in the field of socialist industry, the development of socialist agriculture and of the people's culture. Later, as a result of a number of new revolutionary undertakings carried out by the people's government, capitalist production relations were completely done away with, the exploitation of man by man was eliminated, an end was put to the capitalist class as a social group. Gradually the country entered a new and higher stage in its development—the stage of the construction of a *developed socialist society*. To reach this stage however, a period of transition from capitalism to socialism was needed. In this respect again the definition of the people's democratic state given by Georgi Dimitrov is in full accord with the historical process and stages in the development of Bulgaria.

In Friendship with the Soviet Union

In revealing the nature of the people's democratic state, Georgi Dimitrov laid particular stress on the fact that it was established in *friendship and co-operation with the Soviet Union*. The role of the Soviet Union did not end with the creation of conditions for the establishment of a people's democracy. The further development of every people's democratic state presupposed and demanded the preservation and strengthening of a close relationship, sincere co-operation, mutual assistance and friendship with the Soviet Union. Any tendency of weakening the co-operation with the Soviet Union, Georgi Dimitrov pointed out, was levelled at the very heart of people's democracy.

An essential feature of the people's democratic state, revealed by Georgi Dimitrov, was the fact that it belonged to the *democratic anti-imperialist camp*. Proceeding from the principle of proletarian internationalism, Georgi Dimitrov expounded the idea that it was only by participating in the united democratic anti-imperialist camp that a country of people's democracy could guarantee its independence sovereignty and security against the onslaught of the

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imperialist forces. This concept has found a suitable juridical expression in the new Bulgarian constitution, which in its Art. 12 stipulates that the People's Republic of Bulgaria forms part of the world socialist community, which is one of the main conditions for its independence and all-round development.

A New Form of Transition to Socialism

In his theoretical elucidation of the nature of the people's democratic state Georgi Dimitrov started from the position formulated by Lenin that "the transition from capitalism to communism cannot but be accompanied by a tremendous variety of political forms." In people's democracy Georgi Dimitrov saw precisely *a new form of political organisation of socialist power*. In this connection he pointed out that "the possibility of achieving the transition from capitalism to socialism through the regime of people's democracy without establishing a Soviet regime was provided in the countries of people's democracy." The people's democratic revolution and socialist construction under the conditions of people's democracy had the same basic features and elements as the great October Socialist Revolution and the Soviet experience in socialist construction. That is why the revolution and the process of socialist construction in Bulgaria, for example, were a repetition of all basic features of the October Socialist Revolution. At the same time, however, certain peculiar features were also revealed in these processes.

The first peculiar feature of the people's democratic regime as a new form of organisation of socialist power consists in the fact that it does not exclude the participation in political life of other parties besides the Communist Party. In Bulgaria the transition from capitalism to socialism started with the existence of many political parties, with a multi-party government, with the existence of even opposition parties at first. This can be explained by the fact that the people's democratic revolution in Bulgaria combined the class struggle of the working class against capitalism with the struggle of the entire people against fascism and imperialism, for the country's national liberation from Nazi occupation. Under the leadership of Georgi Dimitrov a broad front was established, which included not only the working class but also all anti-fascist, anti-imperialist and anti-monarchist forces, including also the representatives of some petty bourgeois and bourgeois parties.

Bulgarian Agrarian Union

At present the political system of the People's Republic of Bulgaria is characterised by the fact that besides the Bulgarian Communist Party, which is the leading force in the state and society, there exists also the Bulgarian Agrarian Union which also takes part in the political life and the government of the country. According to Article 1, line III of the Constitution, "The Bulgarian Communist Party heads the construction of an advanced socialist society in the People's Republic of Bulgaria in close fraternal co-operation with the Bulgarian Agrarian Union".

The participation of the Bulgarian Agrarian Union in the government of the country, in its ideological and political, economic and cultural life, serves as a vivid refutation of the allegations denying the possibility of a lasting alliance between the Communist Party and the other democratic forces in the socialist revolution and in the struggle for the victory of the new system.

A characteristic feature of the people's democratic system as a specific form of political organisation of society in Bulgaria is the existence of such a political organisation as the Fatherland Front. It is an original, history-based element in the political system of people's democratic Bulgaria. According to Art. 11 of the Constitution, the Fatherland Front is an embodiment of the alliance of the working class, the toiling peasants and the people's intelligentsia. It is the social support of the people's rule, a mass school for the patriotic and communist education of the population and for enlisting the working people in the government of the country.

Without Civil War

Among the peculiarities which lend a specific character to the people's democratic regime, we should also mention the fact that the consolidation of socialist power in the country took place in the conditions of a sharp struggle with the capitalist class which was overthrown from power, *but without a civil war*. This had its reflection also on the process of shattering the bourgeois state apparatus by the revolution, as well as in the setting up of a socialist state apparatus. The peculiarities in this respect were revealed, above all, in the fact that the destruction of the bourgeois state apparatus was effected not with a single act, but gradually, over a comparatively longer period, by making use of some old organisational forms of the state mechanism, as well as of legal methods. Thus, for instance, for a certain period after the victory of the people's revolution in Bulgaria, the stipulations of the bourgeois constitution found in existence by the revolution continued to be still in force. In this connection, some political institutions, established by that constitution, continued to function. Thus, for instance, the monarchy was not immediately abolished as an institution; a people's regency fulfilling the function of head of state was established. This people's regency was envisaged as a political institution in the bourgeois constitution, but its

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function was a new one now and it served the goals of the victorious socialist revolution and not those which it was meant to serve under the old constitution.

Some specific features characterising the people's democratic regime in Bulgaria were also revealed in the transformation of farming into large-scale socialist farming. They manifested themselves, above all, in the fact that this process took place *without nationalisation of the land*, but along the road of setting up co-operative farms by the petty and middle farmers. A system of co-operative farms was thus formed, which developed gradually into the present system of large agro-industrial complexes.

Laws of Socialist Revolutions

These peculiarities of the people's democratic regime manifested themselves as a result of the creative application of the main and general principles and laws of the socialist revolution. Thus it would be wrong to assume that socialist construction in Bulgaria takes place in some specific, national way, different in principle from the classical scheme in the Soviet Union. In this respect the words of Georgi Dimitrov that the similarity between the people's democratic and the soviet government is to be found in what is basic, what is decisive, in that they are both governments of the working class in alliance with and at the head of the working people, enables us to draw very important inferences about the need of an all-sided study, and of making the widest possible use of the experience of socialist construction in the Soviet Union. "This experience," Georgi Dimitrov said, "applied to our conditions, is the only model for socialist construction in this country and in the other countries of people's democracy" (*Works*, v.14, p. 348).

Not only did Georgi Dimitrov describe people's democracy and the people's democratic state, but he also defined *their role*. In fact he pointed out that "embodying the domination of the working people under the leadership of the working class, the regime of the people's democracy could and should in the present historical set up . . . successfully function as a dictatorship of the proletariat. . . ."

Dictatorship of the Proletariat

The concept proletarian dictatorship in Marxist political theory and practice is often misunderstood and misinterpreted. Proletarian dictatorship means political domination of the working class, organisation of its political power. Its supreme principle is the alliance of the working class with the toiling peasantry and the people's intelligentsia, as a result of which political domination by the working class is exercised in the interest of all working people, of the broad people's masses.

The experience accumulated in the People's Republic of Bulgaria and in the other people's democracies has fully confirmed the theoretical formula provided by Georgi Dimitrov about the nature and role of people's democracy.

Already in 1948 Georgi Dimitrov noted that "the regime of people's democracy will doubtlessly change." And indeed, it has constantly developed and improved. The people's democratic government has developed and improved parallel with it. According to Marxist-Leninist theory the institution of proletarian dictatorship is *a transitional political institution*. It is necessary until socialism is constructed and the corresponding prerequisites are at hand for starting the construction of the material and technological base of communism. There is no more capitalism in the People's Republic of Bulgaria and socialism has triumphed in town and country. Under these circumstances, as has been pointed out in the programme of the Bulgarian Communist Party, while preserving its basic characteristic features and functions of state of proletarian dictatorship, our state is increasingly becoming a political organisation of the entire people. It extends its social base and *develops into a state of all the people*.

In defining the people's democratic state as a specific form of proletarian dictatorship, Georgi Dimitrov pointed out that the countries of people's democracy had embarked on the road to socialism, without even for a moment ceasing to wage a struggle against the internal and particularly against the external hostile forces. In this connection he also pointed out their goals and functions. They boil down to: a constant strengthening of the leading positions of the working class headed by the Communist Party in all spheres of state, economic, public, political and cultural life; strengthening the union of the working class with the toiling peasantry under the leadership of the working class; helping in the accelerated development of the public sector of the national economy and more specifically of socialist industry; preparing the ground for doing away with the capitalist exploiting elements in farming by pursuing a consistent political line of their repression, and subsequently of removing them and doing away with them as a class; helping the all-round development of the producer co-operatives among the masses of the peasantry and rendering state assistance to the petty and middle farmers, etc. Georgi Dimitrov pointed out in particular that insofar as the land was concerned, the problem of its nationalisation under the conditions existing in the People's Republic of Bulgaria, i.e. with the development of the co-operative farm system, was of no practical importance. Thus "the nationalisation of the land is not a condition, a *sine qua non* for the

(completed on p. 217)

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Memories of Dimitrov

A Tribute to Georgi Dimitrov

Isabel Brown

On June 18, 1882, a man was born of working class parents in a humble home, who was to influence the course of history and stand out as one of the greatest heroes of revolutionary struggle—Georgi Dimitrov.

As secretary of the Anti-fascist Committee in Britain, in the early '30s, I frequently visited Berlin for discussions with our comrades in the international movement. There, in 1930, I first met Georgi Dimitrov. At once, I was struck by his clear minded political sagacity, his eloquence and his sheer joy of living in such a period of struggle. Already in 1928 he was warning us of the danger of the emergence of fascism and was pointing the way forward to the need to win allies to withstand its onslaught.

With the burning of the Reichstag in 1933, the real character of fascism was illumined as in a great light. The attacks on the workers' and progressive organisations, the burning of the books, the distortion of science and law, brought new allies into the fight.

Our committee, based on the working class, was now supported by leading labour people like Ellen Wilkinson, Harold Laski, Kingsley Martin, Aneurin Bevan, Jennie Lee, Lord Marley and Lord Listowel; many intellectuals and writers: J. B. Priestley, H. G. Wells, Vera Britain, Professors Haldane, Levy, Hogben, P. M. Blackett and leading lawyers like Sir Stafford Cripps and D. N. Pritt. It was this committee that was able to organise the campaign for Dimitrov and his colleagues immediately on their arrest by the Hitlerites. We were determined to save their lives. At one of our great mass meetings in London, we took the theme, "We want our heroes to live". It was not enough to honour our martyrs. We must save them.

For a Public Trial

We decided to force a public trial of the accused. There was a great danger of their disappearing like millions of others into concentration camps.

We therefore decided to stage a legal Enquiry into the Burning of the Reichstag, prior to the trial. International lawyers of high standard from several countries agreed to serve as judges. We chose London as its venue because, at that stage of world public opinion, Hitler was susceptible to pressure from Britain more than from other countries.

We decided that the Enquiry must be strictly legal—the laws of evidence firmly applied. Our aim was to save our comrades—not merely to make a propaganda effort.

We were able to secure witnesses—many leading German politicians and officials who were now refugees and would have been unable to testify later in the Leipzig People's Court. One very pertinent witness, who had responsibility for the security of the Reichstag building, showed us plans of the Reichstag, the entrances and exits, the security arrangements and so on, and satisfied our legal experts that only with Nazi connivance could the incendiary material have been placed in the building.

The world press was already uneasy at the events in Hitler Germany in the early months of 1933. So when our Public Enquiry took place in August 1933, they gave it world coverage—main headlines. Even before Dimitrov startled the world by his personal courage in Leipzig, he had already become a world figure, heroic, challenging.

The fact that the Enquiry was held in the Court of the Law Society, that leading national figures attended every session, that its findings were announced at a great mass meeting in Caxton Hall, London, gave it news value that was headlined in the world press.

The Times gave it very full reporting, including a remarkably favourable leading article. At that time *The Times* was allowed to be sold in Berlin. German comrades have told me since how they got copies, duplicated its reports for clandestine distribution in factories and so on, and thus showed German anti-fascists that they were not alone—international solidarity existed.

Growing Mass Support

The Enquiry was a high and dramatic point of our campaign, but it was only possible and made such an impact because, not only were leading personalities supporting and taking part in our work, but a broad mass movement of the working class was growing, finding new allies, taking mass forms. Every town and city of any size in Britain saw famous writers, lawyers, politicians, labour men and communists speaking on a common platform against fascism. So, in life itself, we began to forge the chains of unity, which alone could bring about the defeat

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of this foul enemy of the people. Money came from the ordinary people, trade unionists, co-operators, labour party and communist organisations. It was heartwarming to receive the hundreds of letters, containing the gifts of money, large and small, all with one clear message. We must save Dimitrov and his comrades; we must destroy fascism.

The exposure of the real ugly face of fascism which these great meetings gave, the numbers of pamphlets, leaflets, books, all helped to build up the strong current of anti-fascism, which served our country well in the final battles of the 1939-45 war.

When the actual trial of Dimitrov and others took place in the so-called People's Court at Leipzig, he leaped into the centre of the stage and became the personal hero of millions throughout the world. Dimitrov's conduct of his own defence was a model of communist behaviour; his defence became an attack on fascism. He aroused the conscience of the whole world.

The combination of Dimitrov's courageous example, the growing mass movement and our ability to take advantage of all forms of legality won the first great victory over the Nazis. Dimitrov was freed and lived to lead the Communist International at its Seventh World Congress, which laid down the basic lines of our strategy of unity with allies for a common cause.

It is impossible to over-estimate the effect of Dimitrov's courage at Leipzig, particularly his confrontation with Goering who was reduced to a gibbering idiot by Dimitrov's attacks. We had succeeded in focussing world attention on this trial. We knew the nature of Nazism, and that Goering's shrieks "Wait till we get you out of this Court" were no idle threats. We, therefore, took care to have responsible well known British personalities constantly in the Court in Leipzig, watching and guarding as well as we could. One British lawyer sat through every session of the trial; press men supplied very full reports of every detail. Never before had a political trial so rivetted the attention of the whole world.

Even now, nearly forty years after, people talk to me of Dimitrov and that great campaign with pride and confidence. Young people who could not possibly remember—or were not even born—have told me of how their parents had taken part in this struggle and what an indelible mark it had made on their lives.

The flames of the Reichstag lit up a terrible scene of bestial repression, barbarism, and racial hatred.

It was Dimitrov, by his incredible bravery, by his capacity, even from a torture chamber, to see clearly the political implications, who gave us a guiding line and was the pivot round whom the first great links of unity in struggle against fascism were forged. He was saved by his own great courage and the wide mass movement. He lived to work in Moscow and to bring about far-reaching changes in the theory and practice of the whole international communist movement. This came up more clearly in his report to the Seventh World Congress in 1935—the call for United Front Action.

This approach helped to bring Popular Front governments in France and Spain. The lessons we learned helped us in building in Britain such a broad unity support of Republican Spain, which wielded enormous influence and helped us to conduct some of the greatest campaigns Britain had ever witnessed. This was the living expression of the lessons we had learned in our campaign for the life of Dimitrov and the impetus given by his report to the Seventh World Congress. One more simple lesson from these experiences. Dimitrov himself was a superb orator and agitator. How often he emphasised that we should speak to the people in the simplest language that all could understand.

So there this great man stands, dominating so much of the history of the great anti-fascist upsurge which penetrated deeply into the hearts of the people and largely helped the destruction of Hitler and Mussolini.

He lived to see the liberation of his beloved Bulgaria and become its first Prime Minister.

What a man—in his political sagacity, his indomitable courage, his earnest simplicity. And how he loved life and people—the whole of humanity was embraced in his great heart.

He was a hero who inspired millions, a great leader who still points the way forward especially for us in Britain, with our policy firmly based on the fight for unity of the working class movement and its allies, inspired by our own Programme "The British Road to Socialism".

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